

DOINGWHATWORKS



Presentation

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Increasing Time on Task

Waterford High School, California • June 2008

Topic: Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools

Practice: Quick Wins

Highlights

- Teachers and schools can control the amount of time spent on task in the classroom.
- Schools can move announcements to a single time during the day and stop administrative interruptions by the school office.
- An alternating block schedule decreases the number of transitions and maximizes time on task.

About the Site

Waterford High School

Waterford, CA

Demographics

55% White

40% Hispanic

1% Asian

1% Black

46% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

13% English Language Learners

9% Special Education

Waterford High School had several components to its successful turnaround process:

- Collaborative agreement on the school's mission statement, which includes the school's vision, beliefs, and expected student outcomes
- Collaborative decision-making processes as part of creating new instructional norms for the school
- Use of a data-driven approach and collaboration among teachers in planning instruction

Full Transcript

Slide 1

Welcome to the overview on Increasing Time on Task.

Slide 2

I'm Don Davis, the Principal of Waterford High School in Waterford, California.

Slide 3

We had outside observers visit our classrooms and conduct a survey of our instructional practices.

Slide 4

And they determined that our teachers enjoy teaching; they cared about students; there was good affect in the classroom, and that the rapport was strong. But what they also determined was that our time on task was not being optimized, with 65% actually time on task—or 65% of the time something educational was occurring, and the other 35% of the time nothing educational was occurring.

Slide 5

So, we began to address time on task immediately and said this is something within the teachers' control. Teachers can control the minutes and how they are used. So we had a discussion of things that could improve time on task.

Slide 6

Attempting to go from bell to bell with teaching and student production and student engagement. So that was the first strategy. Try to go bell to bell. Videotapes would be approved, and that they would be interactive with the students. The transition times would be narrowed

Slide 7

and that students would be held accountable for the lesson, the objectives, and for questions.

Slide 8

We attempted to monitor this. So the vice principal and I would go into classrooms and if 80% of the students or more were engaged with that lesson, then we would mark that as a time on task. But if you have students that aren't engaged, that's an off-task minute.

Slide 9

And transitions, we would look to see how many minutes were just being wasted, then we would report back to the teachers via email, "did we do better?" and have those conversations.

Slide 10

To optimize your minutes, or your time for instruction or time on task, there are things you can do operationally. You move your announcements to one time during the day, you stop interruptions in the classrooms, and you say we don't interrupt for things that we might need at the office, and we commit to the teachers that we won't interrupt instruction.

Slide 11

The other things that we do is we have an alternating block schedule, which decreases the number of transitions that students have to complete in a day. Instead of going to six classes in a day they only go to three classes in a day.

Slide 12

We also implemented a homeroom period or what we call our "O" period of 30 minutes a day where we have grade-level instructional time. And this is one reason we believe that our CAHSEE, or our California High School Exit Exam, pass rate has risen to the highest in our county—because we prep students on the front

end for that exam during this homeroom time, and students are held accountable in that those grades are forwarded to their math and language arts teachers.

Slide 13

So you can even package your educational programs...once you lose a minute... so we place a premium on time and try to use it wisely.

Slide 14

Our educational program is also designed to maximize time in that we put our interventions inside the school day. After-school interventions help and we provide those for students. But it's when you place it inside the school day, and you require the students to have the intervention in algebra or in language arts, then you have the students there, and you are going to maximize that time with them and prep them for the standards that they're learning, review the standards, and remediate those deficiencies.

Slide 15

So, you see it in the master schedule. You see it in the bell schedule, but you mainly see it in the delivery of instruction,

Slide 16

that when the students come into class, we're about the business of school today, and we're going to have an objective, a purpose for our lesson, or students producing in class and no more minutes just wasted for non-productive use.

Slide 17

To learn more about time on task, please see the additional materials on the Doing What Works website.