

Indian Land Middle School

300 Catawba Street
Lancaster, SC 29720
Principal: David McDonald

Indian Land Middle School is the newest of five middle schools in the Lancaster County School District, a fast-growing area which is transitioning from a rural area to a suburb of Charlotte, North Carolina. Indian Land has successfully initiated several programs that positively impact student learning, including a uniform course syllabus, daily learning intentions, and rubrics and expectations posted on the school's website. Teachers have common planning time to collaborate on standards-based lessons, and they provide students with exemplars of high-quality work and rubrics prior to giving assignments.

- ◆ Middle (6-8)
- ◆ 78% White
- ◆ 12% Black
- ◆ 5% Hispanic
- ◆ 5% Other
- ◆ 22% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

Monitoring learning progress has become a major focus at the school. During the 2008–09 school year, staff began using data notebooks that include all data about benchmarks and response to instruction. The same year, the school became a pilot site for Keeping Learning on Track, a formative assessment professional learning community. The pilot included peer observations of the implementation and use of formative assessments. The pilot teachers are now coaching others in formative assessment strategies. Individual conferences with students follow screening assessments so students can set individual goals with teachers. Students self-assess work using rubrics and exemplars.

Tiffany Evans teaches Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention classes at Indian Land, as well as a special education math resource class. She worked with Winthrop University's Dr. Bradley Witzel to learn strategies for using visual representations and an explicit concrete-representational-abstract (CRA) sequence of instruction and practice in math. Evans has found that following a CRA sequence enables her students to retain concepts and skills better than simple demonstration and practice.

Evans prefers flexible manipulatives with multiple uses, such as integer chips, popsicle sticks, and magnetic number lines. She has been using a SMART Board in math class for demonstrations, transitioning from concrete to representation, and checking student understanding. Evans uses the SMART response system in which every student has a key pad and their responses are immediately sent to the teacher's computer for checking.

Evans has prepared students to work in pairs for practice, using well-established routines. The peer work greatly expands the opportunities for student communication. Evans believes explaining a concept to someone else helps students develop a more solid grasp. After they have worked in pairs and seem to understand a concept, she may ask students to demonstrate concepts to the whole class as another way of confirming their understanding.

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