

Minnesota Principals Academy – Action Learning Project
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Increasing Student Achievement And Motivation Through Goal Setting

Abstract

This Action Learning Project focused on creating a tier one system in which all students would receive instruction on how to improve academic behaviors, primarily looking at goal setting. Becker School District does not currently have a guaranteed and viable curriculum dedicated to teaching academic behaviors (study skills). Effective study skills are associated with positive outcomes across multiple academic content areas. Currently the middle school does not have a specific process and/or common language for teachers on teaching academic behaviors. As the school district continues to move towards implementing the Response to Intervention model, which would provide a structured, systematic program for students, the middle school focused on creating a tier one system in which all students receive instruction on how to improve academic behaviors. The project evaluated parents, students, and teachers understanding of the importance of goal setting and study skills.

This was the first year in implementing a structured program for 6th grade students. Information gathered from the first year through teacher, parent, and student surveys along with teacher meetings indicates that having a specific program that all students receiving the same instruction, using common language was beneficial.

Vision: Student achievement and motivation increase after being taught how to set goals at school.

Background/Context: Becker Middle School consists of grades 6, 7, 8. Demographics of the student body of 680 students. Demographics of the student body of 680 students: 19% FRL, less than 4% Students of Color, 11% SPED, less than 1% ELL.

Why this ALP? Teachers at Becker Middle School have provided students with study skills that they felt necessary to help students be successful. This year, all 6th grade students were provided with specific information on study skills, using a common language between teachers. The students were provided with the study skills activities in their Social Studies classes. Only three of the nine teachers provided the instruction. The teachers focused on setting goals with students and connecting with student motivation and engagement.

What we did: A team consisting of staff from the intermediate and middle school met to discuss whether or not there was a need to look at implementing a program that involved teaching academic behaviors within the Becker School District. The team consisted of administrators, the curriculum director, teachers, counselors, social workers, and school psychologists from both the intermediate and middle schools. There was a general discussion on the different types of behaviors that were of primary concern. Buffum, Mattos, Weber (2012) indicated that behaviors fall into two categories; academic misbehaviors and social misbehaviors. After the team identified the difference between the two, reviewed discipline referrals from the buildings, the decision was made to focus on academic misbehavior. With the decision now focused on academic misbehaviors, the discussion then turned to how it would be implemented, the curriculum, and the staff involvement.

The team decided to use a research-based program, SOAR, Study Skills Program as a guide when working with improving student skills. Before the implementation process in the fall of 2014, there were certain items that needed to be in place. Teachers were surveyed on the academic misbehaviors in the spring of 2014. Students were surveyed at the beginning and end of the 2014-2015 school year on goals and goal setting.

Survey Results:

Student survey:

Students were assessed two times during the 2014-2015 school year. Responses were based on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not True) to 4 (Very True). Five of the questions focused on goal setting.

According to the results, students' views did not change significantly in the area of goal setting. If anything, the students' responses decreased rather than increased.

Teacher Survey

The 6th grade teachers filled out a questionnaire in the fall and spring of the 2014-2015 school year. Five of the questions asked focused specifically on goal setting, student engagement, and student motivation.

According to the data, all areas improved except for student engagement.

Parent Survey

Survey was given in the Fall 2014. There was one question specifically in the area of setting goals. 77% of the parents indicated that their child(ren) know how to set goals.

Implication for practice:

Collaboration:

1. Academic Behavior Committee: A team consisting of curriculum director, Teachers (Grades 5 & 6), and administration. Facilitator of the committee, curriculum director. This committee focused on implementing study skills program at both the intermediate and middle schools. Continued work focuses academic behavior tier system; continue with tier 1, creating an academic (study) skills scope and sequence.

Instruction:

Common Language: By using the same type of activities from *SOAR, Study Skills Program*, the Social Studies teachers felt that they were consistent with the information being taught.

Next Steps:

1. Implement the activities provided within the SOAR, Study Skills booklet. Continue to build Tier 1, and then begin to look at Tiers 2 & 3. Types of intervention that can be provided once Tier 1 is in place.
2. 2015-2016 school year Becker Middle School will be 1:1 mini iPad. A team of teachers will discuss how to incorporate study skills, including ipads. Additional curriculum planning time may will be needed.
3. All 6th grade teachers will implement the SOAR activities. This year only three 6th grade teachers provided the study skills instruction. The 6th grade teachers felt that in order to have it consistent and part of the common language, all teachers should be using the strategies indicated in the SOAR curriculum.
4. Curriculum time: Academic Behavior Committee members meet to discuss scope and sequence of activities that will be introduced in the intermediate building and then continue to extend not only in 6th grade, but also be incorporated into 7th grade.
5. Student engagement and motivation: continue to focus on the importance of student engagement and motivation, incorporate 40 Assets (Search Institute).
 - a. 2014-2015 Becker School District completed the Developmental Assessts Profile. The areas to focus on included constructive use of time (fits well with goal setting) and positive identity. These areas are a focus not only within the middle school, but district-wide.

