

Minnesota Principals Academy - Action Learning Project
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Responding to the demand for academic intervention, mental health support and equitable practices through alternate scheduling

Abstract

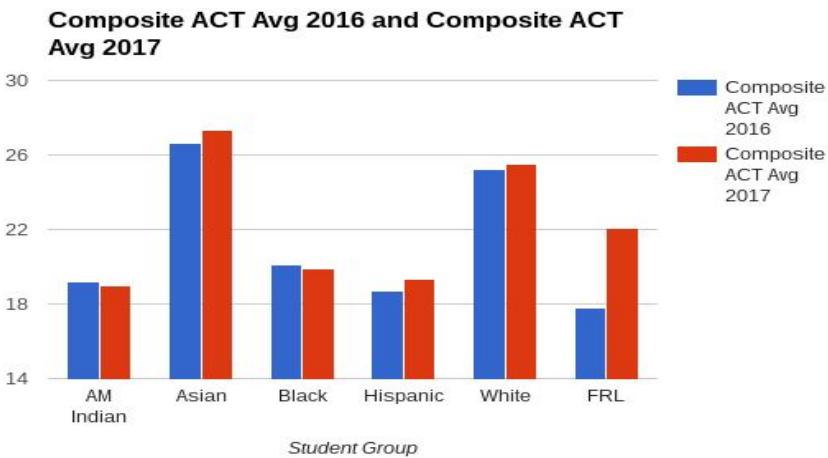
This Action Learning Project was initiated due to the demand on our high school students. As part of our change in grading practices, all students have access to re-learning and re-assessment opportunities. We were finding there was an ever-increasing demand on time during the school day. Teachers, likewise, were finding they wanted to have more time outside of class with students. This, often, was happening before and/or after school. This quickly became an issue of equity - where not all students were able to accommodate those times or provide transportation. REFLECT (Re-focus, Re-learn, Re-examine, Re-connect, Re-teach) was very much teacher driven and designed. MVHS worked in partnership with Irondale High School to student varying metro models and configure a unique schedule to meet our needs.

REFLECT was conducted a phase 1 series of REFLECT days in the spring of 2016. The intent behind this was to learn from our students and listen to their feedback. In addition, our teachers were critical in helping us “tweak” our schedule in order for full implementation for the 2016-2017 school year.

Vision: The vision for this project was to examine the effect(s) of REFLECT on our student population. In particular by monitor academic progress, measuring mental health status and ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all students.

Background/Context:

Mounds View High School has a student population of 1,850 students. Approximately 73% of the student body is white, 17% Asian and 10% Black and Hispanic. Upon graduation, more than 90% of the students pursue post-secondary school options and our ACT composite scores are as follows:



However, our academic monitoring tells us a student of color is twice as likely to receive one or more I's as compared to their white counterparts.

Total I's - 7.4%

White - 6.3%

Black - 15.1%

SpEd - 15.3%

FRLP - 21.3%

What we did: We researched varying models to determine how to amend our school day to accommodate REFLECT. We taught students how to use this time effectively and urged them to use this time in a responsible manner. Teachers were encouraged to "invite" (REFLECT App) students during this time for academic interventions. We communicated with students and families to help them understand the purpose - all done in partnership with Irondale High School.

What we found out: Our students, families and teachers are all in consensus - they want more REFLECT time. While we originally prepared for this time to be only during 5-day school weeks, but the overwhelming success has us re-examining our calendar to add additional dates. The REFLECT time allowed for students to work on their Semester 1 I's which led to a 21% decrease by April of 2017. Those students will not have to attend summer school to attain that credit. Students report a decrease in academic pressure, therefore leading us to believe their mental health well-being is in a better place. The dean team is in the process of measuring this status and progress for the 2017-2018 school year.

Implications for practice: We feel we are in the early stages around data collection and monitoring of the effect(s) of REFLECT. We will continue to make our areas of focus around academics, mental health and equitable practices. Collected data will be shared with our teachers and community members. We will also continue our collaboration with IDHS to identify how to improve this intervention time and make it most effective for all students.

