

Promoting A Successful Step (PASS)

Supporting Seventh grade students in transition

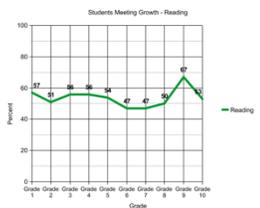
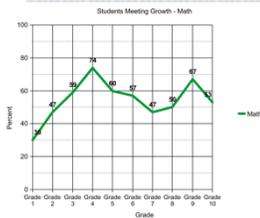
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Abstract

This study focuses on the learning characteristics of young adolescent children and their unique learning needs. The study evaluates the implementation of a transition team to develop interventions in reading and math to support students in transition from an elementary school setting to a junior high school setting. This analysis of the nature of the child in transition from elementary school to a middle level setting, will guide the re-design and improvements necessary to ensure every child is receiving a quality educational experience. The research found measurable improvements in student assessments, particularly math, when compared to previous classes as a result of intervention efforts in reading and math. Transition efforts implemented as a part of this study resulted in improved awareness for seventh grade students and a more positive experience based on survey results of both parents and students.

Vision: Provide opportunities for all Learners to develop the knowledge, skills, character, and attributes necessary for success in a chanaina world.



Background

Roseau had a history of poor academic success for seventh grade students. Over the past five years we were able to identify through assessment data that students in grade seven demonstrated a flat or negative growth score in reading and math as compared to the national trend. This poor performance in seventh grade showed little improvement in eighth grade before recovering in grade nine. This was a combination of a number of factors including: junior high concept, teacher beliefs, curriculum focus, homework loads, continuity of supports, and no active support team meeting regularly on students.

Importance

Without a focused effort to intervene with students who were struggling with academic, social, or emotional needs at seventh grade, we ran the risk of alienating these students early in their high school career. We were able to track students with high risk of dropping out of school and found numerous indications of unmet needs by seventh grade. While these needs existed prior to seventh grade, they were more exposed due to a lack of consistent learning supports for non-SPED students as they transitioned to junior high. Even students who were performing closer to norms demonstrated a decline in academic performance in early junior high as compared with years before and after.

Normal Adolescent Risk Factors

Physical development, sexual development, social changes, academic expectations and pressures, moral awareness, educational system change, and lockers.

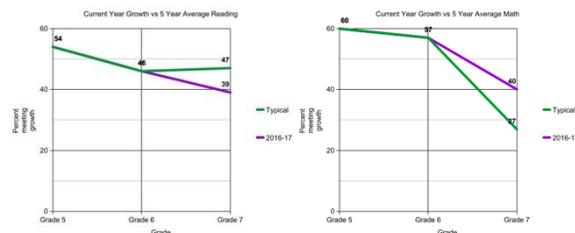
Study

A team was developed to focus specifically on the concerns of seventh grade students to help identify skills or needs that were lacking, resulting in poor academic performance. The PASS team consisted of administration, school counselor, school social worker, teachers from regular education and special education, and an intervention specialist. The team met to identify students who received services in sixth grade that would need support in seventh grade. The team identified students to place on a watch list and action list. Action list students were placed in an intervention study hall. Watch list students were monitored for signs of struggle. Students made the list for academic and emotional needs, lack of specific school skills, or lack of home support. The PASS team met with teachers who had contact with the student daily and worked to identify risk factors for each student and create appropriate interventions for the classrooms to assist the student. These interventions included: guided study hall, morning homework support, staff awareness and training, reduced homework loads, classroom and curriculum adjustments, close monitoring, tutoring, personalized math supports, reading/writing structures across disciplines, seventh grade

orientation, and student helpers week one.

Specific interventions to target reading and math success included an Article of the Week writing activity conducted in three core content areas to reinforce writing skills and reading skills. Math interventions were targeted to specific students identified as lacking foundational math skills, these students were given a second math course for one semester with the goal of providing a better foundational knowledge.

Student and Parent perspectives were important to understand the value of the districts efforts to help students transition between sixth and seventh grade. To solicit these perspectives; parents with children in grade seven were asked about their opinions on the seventh-grade experience for their child. Seventh grade students were also surveyed. This process was repeated with the eighth-grade students and parents to develop control group data. Seventh grade teachers were also surveyed to assess their opinions on the effectiveness of intervention efforts.



Results/Conclusion

The conclusions drawn here was there appeared to be little measurable impact on the reading growth scores of students for the year. Seventh grade students still experienced a regression in growth that fell below the district average over 5 years. The intervention effort was not uniformly implemented across curriculum areas. This likely limited the effectiveness of the intervention effort. In math scores, the results of student testing in this area is quite remarkable. In defying the five-year trend, students experienced a growth in proficiency. The intervention efforts in math, targeting the math deficiencies of students, may have likely helped to reinforce math skills. These efforts contributed to a growth in proficiency for the current seventh grade class, defying the typical drop experience by the previous seventh grade classes. Another encouraging study result was the number of student failures for the current seventh grade class was the third lowest number in the past ten years. Parent and student surveys indicated a more positive opinion of teacher help and homework expectations.

Teachers valued the team approach to struggling students and outside support of classroom intervention needs.