

Standard Three-Narrative

Teaching and Assessing for Learning

Johnson-Brock benefits from both a core group of veteran teachers who continue to challenge themselves professionally as well as novice teachers who bring the latest practices to the table. The teachers in this district are professionals who strive to improve student learning through professional development, curriculum review based on assessment data, and the use of a variety of instructional strategies. The district has made a conscientious effort to truly leave no child behind.

Based on feedback from the last school improvement cycle, the district knew that to maintain its high scores, it would need to better serve the population of students who did not qualify for special services, but were not at grade level. At PLC meetings, teachers in all curricular areas were trained in best teaching practices, with emphasis on improving the reading of nonfiction. The amount of nonfiction reading in all classrooms was increased as well. Because of the training, teachers in the district do an exceptional job of using a variety of strategies to help students comprehend texts necessary for understanding.

In our elementary, student progress is assessed through multiple assessments several times throughout the academic year. Teachers teach skills, strategies, and concepts based on standards and assessment results and then adapt and differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of their students. Teachers meet on a monthly basis to disaggregate data and make instructional decisions for students performing below and above grade level. Opportunity for improving and enriching student performance is provided through supplemental, research-based programs and interventions. Hallmarks of our elementary are our highly-qualified teachers, research-based curriculum, exceptional parental /community involvement, differentiated instruction, and a spirit of teamwork. The recent recognition we have received as a National Blue Ribbon School in 2014 validates the sustainability of our achievements.

To meet the needs of the 7-12 population, key changes were made to the schedule. A mandatory 8th period study hall for students in grades 9-12 now partners teachers with an assigned group of students to provide academic help and serve as an advocate. A new “no zero” policy now makes certain that all students are assessed on their knowledge and skills rather than their non-academic behaviors. To compliment the no zero policy, the district also implemented the Eagle Assist program which holds students accountable for missing work. In addition, teachers and administrators developed Academic Academy classes for students who are missing basic skills in math and language arts.

Johnson-Brock has a tradition of meeting the unique learning needs of students by offering programs such as Career Academies and dual entry courses associated with Peru State College. Surveys from post graduates indicate their appreciation of the education and opportunities given to them while attending Johnson-Brock. They feel prepared for the challenges of both college and work as J-B’s culture expected them to be hard-working, responsible, and well-rounded: qualities that continue to serve them well long after graduation.

The nonfiction reading goal ensures all teachers K-12 use active reading strategies which promote student comprehension. While there is only one low score on the self-assessment, there is additional room for growth. An intentional approach to all indicators in Standard 3 is important for the sustainability of strong teaching practices and assessment of learning.

The amount of testing data the district collects is staggering. While teachers know individual needs, they do not feel as comfortable discussing trend data. Clearly, the school has seen the need for all teachers to be part of this collaborative process, so an early-out schedule now allows important discussions to take place in a timely manner. The overall addition of a master calendar for testing, data disaggregation, and professional training would be helpful for sustainability of the process. For the structure to be successful, clear timelines and assigned leadership roles are imperative. While staff members know that administrative monitoring of classroom instructional practices is taking place, additional monitoring within the classroom is viewed as being valuable for sustainability of strong practices. To better serve new hires and ensure sustainability, a clear structure and guidelines for mentoring teachers and paraprofessionals needs to be developed.

An initial plan for improvement would be to assign teacher leaders to work in tandem with administrators to increase the sustainability of structures that benefit student learning.