

Pupil Services/Special Education

Board Report

May 2024

Pillar #1: Teaching, Learning, and Relevance

- Completing year 2 of the Explicit Instruction Cohort
 - We were 1 of 3 districts selected to participate in the cohort supported by the Department of Public Instruction and the statewide Regional Special Education Network (RSN)
 - Focus on implementing High Leverage Practices and Coaching for regular education and special education teachers
 - The project built the WHY for adaptive change in the district and connected the work of the College and Career Ready-Individual Education Plan (IEP) practices while linking to our continuous improvement processes
 - Supports sustainable change in practice
 - Provided training and coaching to improve instruction (adult behaviors and practices)
 - Coaches made intentional alignment to “Archerisms” and vital signs of Strategic Plan
 - Developed a coaching plan and established reflective practices through collaboration
 - Made connections across contexts
 - Thanks to coaches Chelsea Bubolz, Courtney Sennett, Angela McPherson (Yr 2), and Kelly Tollefson (Year 1)
 - I presented the accomplishments of the project completed by Tomahawk Elementary staff at the Wisconsin Council of Administrators of Special Services Spring Conference on May 2, 2024.
 - April Schofield from CESA 9, who supported and facilitated the work of our team, also wrote an article regarding the work for a state publication in Coaching Chronicles. (See below)

Pillar #2: Whole Student

- Cassie Cerny is obtaining certification to instruct Mental Health First Aid through the support of funding from the Aspirus Community Foundation.
 - She will be able to provide training to students, staff, and the community
- Staff trained in Love and Logic will provide professional development to staff in all buildings. We have staff in each building trained that will be providing the training which will be led by Cassie Cerny, Allison Ewart, and Amanda Duncan.
 - Training will again be provided next year for parents and an additional option specifically geared towards families of students with IEPs.
- Raise Your Voice
 - Informational sessions were held for middle school and high school students
 - More than 50 students have expressed interest in the group and are very excited

- Color Run at TMS is their first event
- Planning is in the works for students to attend the Summer Summit

Pillar #3: Communication and Community Engagement

- Family Events
 - The last event of the year will be on May 21, 2024
 - Cooking Show for early learning students and families
 - Families cook together and take home the appliance used for free
 - Sponsored by Aspirus Community Foundation and the Healthfirst Network

Pillar #4: District Workforce

- Special Education Induction Program
 - Amanda Hoff TES and Makenzie Kathamegos TMS participated
 - Program sponsored by the Department of Public Instruction and statewide CESAs
 - Focus on supporting and retaining teachers new to the field
 - 48 hours of training was provided in: Special Education Requirements, Evaluations, and IEPs, Explicit Instruction, Respectful Learning Environments and Social Behaviors, Active Student Engagement, Positive and Constructive Feedback, and Collaboration
 - Coaching was also provided with the option to continue next year
 - The district will receive compensation from DPI to help cover the sub-costs incurred from the program

Pillar #5: Operational Excellence

- Enrollments, student needs, and service minutes are being reviewed and will be used to develop staff assignments and scheduling for the 2024-2025 school year
- Several grants have been applied for to establish funding sources to support student needs, provide professional development, coaching, vocational training, transition needs, and focus on continuous improvement

Reflection in Action: Harnessing the Power of Video Recordings for Instructional Growth

By April Schofield, Associate Director of Continuous School Improvement, CESA 9

In the age of TikTok and Instagram Reels, educators are increasingly embracing the role of influencers, utilizing social media platforms to share their valuable insights, teaching tips and tricks, and even the lighter side of their profession, including teacher "icks" and the much-loved "teacher outfit of the day." While social media videos have undoubtedly

changed how kids and educators learn, they often lack an unfiltered view of what happens in classrooms each day.

At Tomahawk Elementary School (TES), teachers have also embraced the idea of recording themselves... not to “go viral”, but instead as a tool for reflection and growth. Unlike influencers on social media, educators at TES are not adding filters, background music, or editing out the less-than-perfect moments that are inevitable in elementary classrooms. *They are recording their lessons and watching their instruction in **raw** form.*

Tomahawk began this journey in the 2022-2023 school year when they joined the Wisconsin Regional Special Education Network’s (RSN) Explicit Instruction Cohort. Through the cohort, school leaders and instructional staff participated in professional learning to develop and apply knowledge of High Leverage Practice #16, Explicit Instruction. In addition to participating in training with explicit instruction guru, Anita Archer, the district also received [Swivl recording devices](#) in year one. As staff dug into the explicit instruction practices, they also identified coaches, Chelsea Bubolz and Courtney Sennett, to help support implementation practices. In addition to attending training and planning meetings with other cohort districts, Chelsea and Courtney used year one to learn how to effectively use the Swivl recording devices to capture explicit instruction in their classrooms.

Fast forward to the 2023-2024 school year, when Tomahawk Elementary leaders set out to scale up their implementation efforts. To do so, they considered their team membership and added district Reading Specialist, Angie McPherson to the implementation team. Doing so enabled the team to make connections to literacy instruction as they developed a yearlong plan for elementary teachers to record and reflect on their lessons with their colleagues and project coaches.

Although coaching is relatively new to the district, the Explicit Instruction team forged ahead. The team met to develop a plan for the process and Principal Guy Steckbauer created time within staff meetings and collaboration time to help communicate the purpose and vision for the process with staff members. Chelsea Bubolz, who spends a majority of her day as a special education teacher shared, “Coaching was a step outside my comfort zone. I was afraid of giving direction to my peers (most of whom have been teaching much longer than me), so I made it my goal to support them in a way that was helpful to them rather than viewed as an extra burden on their time.” She further elaborated that it was a positive experience that has helped her and her colleagues grow. The video recording and reflection process was an efficient way to spread information and change practices without overwhelming teachers. Furthermore,

it enabled Chelsea to build relationships with grade-level teachers she didn't normally work with.

As they kicked off the plan and staff began recording their lessons, many reflected that the experience of watching a recording of your teaching was both enlightening and, at times, a bit awkward. All that said, the staff has embraced this discomfort and recognizes the power of self-recording as a tool for reflection and growth. Tana Evans, a third-grade teacher, shared the benefits of the process, stating, "Explicit Instruction training has made teachers more aware of their teaching. I have been continually aware to use clear statements about the purpose and rationale for any new skills that children are learning and I make sure to model and demonstrate the specific learning target. I listen and observe for feedback and improve each lesson based on how children are performing."

As coach Angie McPherson explained, "Reflection is vital to growth. Many teachers reflect informally. I have loved the attention to formal reflection and the tools and time allocated to this process. The use of video has helped teachers to notice aspects of their teaching and student engagement that are difficult to identify while they are in the moment, teaching a lesson. The reflective conversations with colleagues have been invaluable. These conversations promote growth and fine-tuning instruction for all involved."

To help guide conversations with staff, the Explicit Instruction team leveraged resources from the [Instructional Coaching Group](#) (ICG), which McPherson learned about at CESA 9's Instructional Coaching Network. Having tools to guide conversations and time to plan for conversations proved to be very helpful. She has come to love resources from Jim Knight's *The Impact Cycle: What Instructional Coaches Should Do to Foster Powerful Improvements in Teaching*, which are linked below:

- [How to Get the Most out of Watching Your Video](#)
- [Watch your Students](#)
- [Watch Yourself](#)
- [Identify Questions](#)

As the year has progressed and teachers have become more comfortable with recording themselves, the Tomahawk team is looking forward to exploring how to use video recordings in new ways. Teachers are sharing their videos with colleagues so they can learn from one another. Some teachers are also beginning to use their recordings as part of the Educator Effectiveness process. As they look ahead, the team is also considering how to use this process as they prepare to implement new literacy resources in the 2024-2025 school year.

Tomahawk Elementary School's story demonstrates the power of video recordings in promoting reflection. It also reminds us that vulnerability and reflection lie at the heart of the growth process. Whether you are a classroom teacher or instructional coach looking to make improvements, I encourage you to hit record and try out this approach to self-reflection. While there are bound to be some bloopers and tech issues, you might be surprised at the insights you gain and the profound impact it can have on your practice.