



Oak Park Elementary School District 97

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TO: The Board of Education
Dr. Carol Kelley, Superintendent

FROM: Dr. Felicia Starks Turner, Senior Director of Academic & Administrative Services
Jonathan Ellwanger, Principal, Beye School
John Hodge, Principal, Irving School
Jen Las, Teacher, Beye School
Paul Manus, Teacher, Beye School
Emile Williams, Teacher, Irving School
Katie Noonan, Teacher Librarian, Irving School
Renee DeWald, RBT Instructor

RE: Research for Better Teaching (RBT) Update

DATE May 10, 2016

Type of Report: Informational

Budgetary Impact: None

District goals aligned with the report: Goal Area 2 (Build Collaborative Expertise) and Goal Area 3 (Engage with Families and Community)

Purpose of the Report: The purpose of this report is to provide the Board of Education with an update on RBT staff training and parent workshops.

Research for Better Teaching Overview and Impact

Research for Better Teaching (RBT), a school improvement organization with extensive experience in teaching and leadership, was founded in 1979 by Dr. Jon Saphier. The mission of RBT is to build individual and instructional capacity and sustain increased student achievement. RBT provides a common vocabulary for teachers to discuss high expectations for teaching and learning.

Teachers and administrators have indicated that RBT has had a positive impact on teaching and learning. As a result of the RBT courses, teachers and administrators have a renewed sense of courage and conviction to make a difference in the learning of each and every student. There are school-wide and classroom themes on developing growth mindsets and teaching effective efforts to students. Teachers have begun to use success criteria as part of the formative assessment process which describes for all students the qualities of successful work.

In an effort to build RBT individual and institutional capacity to sustain increased student achievement it is important to continue the following:

- Provide parents with tools and language related to high expectations teaching through parent education classes

- Administrators look for and reinforce high expectations teaching expectations during classroom visits, staff meetings and individual teacher conversations
- Expand RBT training for staff

Background on the partnership between District 97 and RBT

In the winter of 2012, Frances Kraft, a 5th grade teacher at Holmes elementary school, submitted an application to participate in the “Closing the Achievement Gap: Strategies for Excellence with Equity Summit” at The Harvard Graduate School of Education. During the summer of 2013, a team of 30, which included D97 administrators and teachers, D200 administrators and teachers, and community leaders, participated in the summit from June 29-July 3, 2013. Topics covered at the summit include the following: parenting, leadership, the achievement gap, youth culture and high expectations teaching (HET).

The then superintendent, Dr. Al Roberts, was so impressed with the high expectations teaching portion of the summit, he immediately contacted Dr. Jon Saphier upon his arrival back in Oak Park to discuss how we could bring the content and concept of high expectations teaching to Oak Park. After much discussion, Dr. Saphier decided to design a course for D97 based on the HET course. High Expectations Teaching is what teachers do to create an atmosphere in which high expectations are communicated clearly and convincingly to all students, not just some. The High Expectations course is about putting the belief that each and every child can learn into action in the classroom to improve student performance. During the HET course, strategies are presented that a teacher should use to maintain an environment for learning. Renee Dewald, RBT trained facilitator and retired teacher from Evanston was hired to teach the HET course.

Work to date: Below is a summary of the RBT staff and parent training.

2013-2014 School Year:

- Began first RBT Cohort (Cohort I)
- Potential participants required to submit an application
- Participants included teachers and administrators from all ten schools and the district office.
- The course consisted of 1 half-day session and 7 full-day sessions (8:30-3:30)

HET Course Content:

- Research shows a high correlation between teacher expectation and student learning.
- Teachers are shown how to design and evaluate their lessons and how to organize their classroom.
- Strategies are presented to show teachers and administrators how to:
 - Increase student motivation
 - Teach students to work harder and more effectively
 - Surround students with structures and practices that relentlessly communicate:
 - What we are doing is important
 - You can do it
 - I’m not going to give up on you - even if you give up on yourself
 - Help students link effort to success

- Apply theories of malleable intelligence and academic ability
- Apply the concept of rigor and the meaning of high standards
- Design classroom structures and procedures to support students' belief in "effort-based ability"
- Explicit teaching of effective study strategies
- Teacher choice of language

2014-2015 School Year:

- Began second RBT Cohort (Cohort II)
- Potential participants required to submit an application
- Participants included teachers and administrators from all ten schools and the district office.
- Course consisted of 7 full-day sessions (8:30-3:30)
- 3 full-day follow up sessions for Cohort I

Monthly Professional Learning for all teachers:

- Designed by teachers Jen Las and Frances Kraft
- 30 minute lessons
- October 2014: Introduction to RBT
- November 2014: Making Thinking Visible
- December 2014: Effective Effort and Attribution Theory
- January 2015: Cultural Competency
- February 2015: Wait Time and Sticking with Students
- April 2015: Cooperative Learning

Parent RBT Sessions: Developing and Nurturing a Growth Mindset in your Child

Implemented Parent Involvement Series

- Session 1: October 18, 2014
 - Background Research
 - Community Builder
 - History of Intelligence: Unraveling the Myth of the Bell Curve
 - Attribution Theory and Mindsets

- Session 2: November 15, 2015
 - Talking to Your Child About Effective Effort
 - Community Builder
 - Key Expectation Messages
 - Effective Effort: Hard Work and Strategies
 - Model a Growth Mindset: The Importance of Language

- Session 3: January 31, 2015
 - Other Ways to Nurture a Growth Mindset
 - Community Builder
 - Article Discussion
 - Teaching Your Child About Mindsets and Brain Malleability
 - Using Effective Effort Resources

- Parent Representation from each school
- Worked in conjunction with PTO Council and principals to seek parent participation
- Parent sessions held in the Board room from 8:30-11:00 a.m.
- 30-40 parents, two teachers and at least one central office administrator in attendance at each session
- Facilitated by Renee DeWald

2015-2016 School Year:

- Began third RBT Cohort (Cohort III)
- Potential participants required to submit an application
- Participants include teachers and administrators from all ten schools and the district office.
- The course consists of 7 full-day sessions (8:30-3:30)
- 3 full-day follow up sessions for 40 participants in Cohorts I & II (Follow up Cohort)

Follow up cohort class design:

- Mornings for sharing deeper knowledge on RBT strategies
- Afternoons for collaborative worktime to create materials for classroom use based on RBT strategies
 - Criteria for Success
 - Model Think-Aloud
 - Mastery Objective
 - Growth Mindset
 - Student Self-Assessment
 - Effective Effort

- Sticking with Students
- etc.
- Open to videotaping of lessons for sharing
- Complete assignments
- Collect data related to student achievement
- Good attendance in prior year

RBT Parent Sessions:

- Session 1: Language and Growth Mindset
- Session 2: Effective Effort
- Session 3: Goal Setting
- Session length: two hours
- 35-40 parents per school attended each session
- Sessions in January, March and April/May
- Invitation sent out to all parents. Select parents sent personal post card and received phone calls from principal or assistant principal

Parent Participant Demographics:

Parent participation in the RBT sessions was high with a total of 232 parents representing 329 students. To date, 51% of these parents participated in both the January and March RBT sessions. Furthermore, the demographics of the students being represented were 58% white, 6% black, 16% Hispanic, 13% multiracial and 7% Asian. Additionally, 93% of the students are full price lunch while 7% of the students are free or reduced lunch status.

Next Steps: Staff

The High Expectations Teaching (HET) course and Follow-Up Sessions trained 120 District 97 administrators and teachers in the language and instructional strategies related to improving the achievement of all students.

As we move into the 2016-17 school year, our work with Research for Better Teaching will focus on providing professional development for administrators and teacher leaders as they support their colleagues implement high expectations teaching strategies.

All Administrators will participate in Analyzing Teaching for Student Results (ATSR). This course builds on the common language and high-leverage teaching strategies of the HET course as administrators develop skills for classroom observation. Administrators will also build their capacity to identify and provide results-oriented reports and feedback that are credible and convincing.

Principals and teacher leaders will participate in Formative Assessment for Results (FAR). This course will focus exclusively on one the components of the HET Course; the daily instructional strategies that teachers

implement ensure the success of all students. The component largely involves the process of formative assessment. Participants will learn how to maximize the power of formative assessment by making its effective use the focus of teacher teamwork.

To sustain a focus and knowledge base on high expectations teaching, the HET course will become part of the Induction Program for non-tenured teachers. In-district facilitators may be trained to better serve this long-range need.

Next Steps: Parents:

Parent sessions will continue at each school. Initial feedback from principals indicate that the sessions be reduced from two to three and they should be held in the fall and winter. It is still being determined if the parent sessions next year will be a continuation with the current parents delving deeper into the topics covered this year or if new parents will be invited to participate using the existing materials.

RBT “Look for” Document for Principals:

An administrator quick reference guide for high expectations teaching is being developed for principals. The guide is designed to be a resource to instructional leaders in “looking for” High Expectations Teaching (HET) strategies in classroom instruction. The document is not intended to be an exhaustive list of RBT strategies but rather a resource to support the array of HET materials provided during RBT training. The reference guide covers RBT strategies such as develop and nurture a growth mindset, daily instructional strategies, motivational structures, making thinking visible, effort based ability and sample mastery objectives. The reference guide will be shared with principals in a June Administrative Leadership meeting.