Elementary Board Report

A Paws-itive Community Learning and Playing Together

Our theme for the month of October is cooperation. As you know, cooperation means being willing to work with other people to get something done. When we cooperate, we are part of a team. We listen to other people's ideas and we do not always have to be the leader or always be right. Most big jobs, and a lot of small ones, require cooperation. Being able to cooperate can make life easier and more fun. It can also help us accomplish more. As you know, our A.C.E. (Accelerated Club for Education) team has been working hard to combine services and resources to best meet our students' needs. The following is an excerpt from a recent e-mail to our staff sharing some of what our A.C.E. team has been up to these first few weeks of school.

A.C.E. Theme

We strive to accelerate learning and meet the needs of each individual student.

Assessments

-433 students assessed using DIBELS in grades K-3
-210 K/1 students assessed by K/1 teachers using the math common assessment as A.C.E. staff served as substitutes in classrooms
-120 third grade students given DAZE assessment using our SuccessMaker laptops
-staff training/support provided on the math common assessment as provided by A.C.E. staff
-input all assessment data on Excel spreadsheets (including past years' DIBELS scores, common assessment scores, MSP scores, etc.), color coded scores by benchmark, strategic, and intensive
-analyzed/interpreted all data for strengths, areas of need, patterns, year-to-year comparisons, and more
-rank ordered all K-3 students according to assessments and data (as required by Title 1 regulations for "targeted assistance" schools)
-analyzing, discussing, and planning learning programs we believe will help meet each student's needs

Program

-grouped students by such areas as learning needs (always striving to keep groups of students to teacher at 3 to 1 or better as shown by research to be best for accelerated learning)
-worked with classroom teachers to improve schedule for student needs and structure push-in/pull-out
-meeting with staff to better understand student needs and how we may best will best meet students' needs
-some of the meetings have included Friday Support meetings (one with each grade level so far), Eval team meetings (one each week), and numerous planning meetings with A.C.E. staff and classroom teachers
-assessed students who we believe will best be supported with the Read Well program to determine student levels and groupings for instruction
-15 different Read Well groups created
-all A.C.E. staff participating in training to support students using the Read Well program (includes observations of program in action)
-developing Language for Learning as a kindergarten assessment
-Read It Again program chosen to support kindergarten students
-A.C.E. staff trained on using Read It Again with students
-parent communication letters and permission slips created and sent home for "qualified" students
-special education portion of A.C.E. started serving students on September 4

-Title 1/LAP portion of A.C.E. started serving students on October 1 (start date impacted by such factors as assessment, recording, analyzing data and patterns, creating programs, scheduling, communications, need for parent clearance, staff training, collaboration needs, and more) -we believe we have learned effective ways to cut this time down significantly while still accomplishing what is needed (a bit more on this shared later)
-number of students currently being served by A.C.E. is 180 students (50 students have IEPs)
-special education staff serving students without IEPs, but assessed to have intensive needs
-Title 1/LAP staff serving students who have IEPs, but assessed to have strategic needs
-A.C.E. staff created SuccessMaker math schedules in collaboration with classroom teachers
-A.C.E. staff input student names and passwords in the SuccessMaker program for each student in grades 4/5
-students in grades 4/5 have been working with their classroom teachers using the SuccessMaker program three days per week

Appreciation
We have many things to be thankful for. The following is only a small sample of the many positive efforts. All of our teachers have worked very hard to support all of our students in the classrooms through such efforts as differentiated instruction. K-3 teachers have worked with A.C.E. staff to provide both concerns and solutions for better serving our students and scheduling. 4/5 teachers have shown great flexibility in working with A.C.E. and supporting our students. Classified staff and specialists have worked hard to use time efficiently and effectively to provide support to our students. Classroom teachers have been open and supportive in sharing student information at such meetings as our Friday Support meetings so that we may better serve our students.

Learning
We have learned a great deal from our experiences so far this school year. One example is that of realizing our need to get into program supporting our students sooner. We believe it is best that our teachers assess our students individually due to the learning gained about each individual student. Having our A.C.E. staff serve as substitutes while teachers assess students has been valuable, but has also delayed start of support services. We have looked for financial resources to hire outside substitutes and believe we have found them. Starting during winter assessments, we plan to no longer use our A.C.E. staff to sub and will hire substitutes in their place so that students will be served sooner.

We have also learned that we are not required to gain approval/signatures from parents of students we believe would benefit from A.C.E. support. Our A.C.E. programs provide interventions which help us to differentiate instruction to better meet the needs of our students. We need to be able to support our students with these effective programs and valuable resources. Without them, we feel we will be significantly limited in our ability to meet our students' needs. In the near future, we will continue sharing information with our families regarding the programs their student(s) will be participating in and seek collaboration on how we may best improve our efforts. We will not seek signatures. This change will save a significant amount of paperwork, energy, time, frustration, and reminders (to families not returning permission slips) so that many students will be served much sooner than in the past.