

Case Study #6:

McCreary County Schools, Kentucky



How did a rural district improve test scores by 13% district-wide?



A systematic integration of research-based instructional tools and strategies and teacher reflection on their own students' work.

Nourishing academic improvement requires a committed effort throughout an entire district. In McCreary County, Kentucky, one approach that led to improved student achievement began during the summer of 2002, when every teacher from the county participated in the Thoughtful Classroom Foundation Training. The teachers worked with Dr. Harvey Silver and his staff for three days to understand differentiation theory and practice. To better address the learning needs of all of their students, participants explored specific strategies and tools that used multiple intelligences and learning styles to more effectively and completely teach academic content.

The district's commitment to all of its students was sustained throughout the subsequent school year. The school calendar was designed with one release day for teachers at the end of each quarter of instruction. Using Thoughtful Classroom instrumentation, teachers and students identified their own learning styles and discussed ways to enhance student achievement. Teachers formed Learning Clubs and worked together in planning their lessons and reviewing the results of their changing instructional choices.

Over the year, Dr. Silver and his consultant team met with the faculty at specific school sites to provide on-going coaching in the use of the differentiation strategies first learned over the summer. Consultant coaches provided assistance and supported teachers through implementation challenges and also provided training in additional strategies. The coaches went into the classrooms and assisted teachers during their lessons, modeling strategies as needed, and facilitated new work through the faculty Learning Clubs.

The results are in...

After a two-year implementation of the Thoughtful Classroom Program, the elementary schools earned an average 13% gain in academic achievement as measured by the CTBS test that was administered to all students. In the middle school, the numbers of students with proficient or distinguished CATS scores in the core subjects for seventh and eighth grade soared by as much as 26%, with an average increase of over 17%.

Results on Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) for Pine Knot Middle School

	2003	2004		2003	2004
CATS Results	At or Above Proficiency	At or Above Proficiency	CATS Results	At or Above Proficiency	At or Above Proficiency
Grade 7			Grade 8		
Reading	37.57%	44.17%	Math	6.25%	26.02%
Science	19.46%	35.83%	Social Studies	19.44%	45.53%

For more information: Aaron D. Anderson, Principal, Pine Knot Middle School; (606)354.2511; aanderson@mccreary.k12.ky.us
Kathy Stephens, Instructional Supervisor of McCreary County Schools; (606)376.9656; kstephens@mccreary.k12.ky.us