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Culminating Action Plan

From Successfully Teaching All to Read (STAR) to Rising Stars

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Executive Summary

According to Serafini (n.d.), reading aloud is the single most important activity to develop proficient readers. However, more and more children do not have access to books, are read to regularly, and do not have exposure to the written language. Ms. Wolfe is a teacher at Gwendolyn Woolley Elementary School, which is a Title I school with a 65% Hispanic K-2 population in Las Vegas, Nevada. It is imperative for these students to learn to read and write in order to have academic and life successes.

When Ms. Wolfe began the Masters program at Sierra Nevada College she saw a need to provide teaching resources to the educators at Woolley Elementary School to provide critical reading instruction of the Big 5 literacy ideas to non-readers. However, as Ms. Wolfe continued through the program and began applying her knowledge she gained she realized that they need of her students to learn reading relied on the children's access to reading and books at home. Through parental observation and the rising communication they have in Spanish with the school, Ms. Wolfe realized that there was a need to provide students with books on CDs and personal CD players for families to utilize at home to hear and read the English Language. Thus Successfully Teach All Students (STAR), which was teaching resources, evolved into Rising Stars, which will provide these books on CDs and personal CD players to students in K-2 students at Woolley Elementary School.

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From Successfully Teaching All to Read (STAR) to Rising Stars

Introduction

Leadership according to Army Leadership (2007) is defined as “the ability to influence others toward achieving the goals and objectives of the organization (p. 1). With this definition in mind, this synthesis paper will focus on teaching practices and my philosophy of teaching as it relates to developing a positive teacher to student relationship. While examining various leadership styles, different traits and approaches will be discussed and applied to establish the classroom environment that will build positive relationships while encouraging students to achieve independence and academic success.

Establishing the Learning Environment

In 2004, Wong explained that the “first days of school will determine your success or failure for the rest of the school year” (2004, p. 3). In order to determine success in the classroom within the first days of school educators employ the path-goal theory. According to Northouse (1997) path-goal theory uses the leader’s style and matches it with the developmental level of the subordinates. He also suggests that the subordinates will be motivated if they are capable of performing the task at hand.

In order for students to be motivated in the classroom there needs to be procedures in place. The goal is to have a smooth running environment that fosters academic success while building independence amongst my students. One way to foster this independence is to establish classroom jobs that students are capable of completing. These jobs can be as simple as sharpening pencils, erasing the board, or taking the attendance to the office. Regardless of the task, these jobs give students ownership in the classroom while encouraging them to feel capable and proud of their accomplishments.

To continue establishing the learning environment educators use Collins (2002) concept of establishing a good-to-great leader by beginning with the “who,” rather than the what. The students are the ones who need to gain the independence and academic success. As their teacher, students are encouraged and provided with the tools to achieve this. As educators begin with the “who”, they focus on the students as people first before they need to accomplish classroom tasks.

An example of this is when an educator transitioned, this past year, from an eighth-grade classroom to a second-grade classroom. During this transition, it was important to examine the capabilities of the students and then consider academic goals. Within the first days of school, extending into the first two weeks, the educator establishes procedures that encouraged students to gain independence and control of their learning. By being more concerned with the “who” rather than the “what”, they tailored their teaching procedures to enhance the abilities of their students.

The learning environment is an essential component to establish uniformity. Denton (2000) explains that the focus of our energy and attention is teaching behavior and establishing a tone. Once the students enter the class room they are responsible to hand in any papers, place a marker on the chart to indicate they are in class, and begin their seatwork without any direction from myself. It is an automatic procedure that everyone follows. This automaticity was achieved by practicing, thus giving them control in the classroom without the guidance from myself or another teacher if they were to have to take over the class. Without procedures in place there would be no foundation to begin to build the positive relationship with the students.

Building Positive Relationships

Once the learning environment has been established the focus can shift to building positive relationships that will encourage students to achieve independence and academic

success in the classroom. Northouse (1997) explains the trait approach is possessing qualities such as intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability in order to establish a relationship with people. Students in our classrooms are people before they are students. Out of the five traits Northouse identifies, self-confidence and sociability will be examined in relation to building positive relationships with students.

Northouse (1997) defines self-confidence as “the ability to be certain about ones competencies and skills.” “It also includes self-esteem and self-assurance” (p. 17). As a teacher, it is important to have the self-confidence in the ability to teach students. Reflecting back to a first year of teaching, an educator did not have this themselves. Lacking in this self-confidence proved to be a detriment as it resulted in a rough year. Based on this prior experience, the educator entered a second-grade classroom convinced they could demonstrate self-confidence to their students. This ability to be self-confident is reflective in the students. They have made mistakes, but they do not get discouraged. They continue to try and learn from those mistakes, thus building their own self-confidence.

For example, while teaching a math strategy that an educator was not familiar with they began making mistakes. While most people may have become frustrated and would have proceeded to struggle through the lesson, they, in turn, stopped the lesson and admitted to the students that they made a mistake. This gave them an opportunity to show the students that teachers can make mistakes. The educator didn't get frustrated, in turn; they found a solution to achieve the outcomes of the lesson. Based on the abilities to accept mistakes, now students don't get frustrated from their own mistakes and they accept and learn from them. Whitaker (2004) states that “although we may think when others criticize us we try harder, but at some point, when it happens too frequently, we are likely to quit” (p. 77). By showing my students self-

confidence they are a less likely to see the criticism negatively, but use it in a constructive way. As a teacher, acceptance of mistakes is critical to building self-confidence. This will lead to the positive relationships with the students.

Positive relationships are built on sociability. Northouse (1997) explains that this is shown through “being friendly, outgoing, courteous, and diplomatic” (p. 18). As in education, sociability is one of the most important traits to building positive relationships with students. When an educator was in school, they may recall never feeling comfortable in an elementary or secondary classroom. Now, it is believed it was from the teacher not having positive sociability. It always seemed like they were “barking” orders at the students. Based on previous experiences, teachers can make a vow when choosing to pursue teaching that they would show the students that their first responsibility is to show compassion and understanding then they will be an educator.

Educators build positive relationships by talking to the students. Within the first few days of school a survey is sent home a survey to the parents to give them a chance to tell the educator about their child. What are their strengths? What are their weaknesses? Then the educator can ask the students to tell them about themselves in a picture or a story. By giving them a choice, this allows them to personalize the picture or the story to fit to convey their own message. These pictures and stories provide a basis for the educator to begin building positive relationships with their students. Educators can integrate, at least once a week, students corresponding through oral and written communication amongst each to talk about what it going on in their lives. Understanding the day-to-day occurrences in the lives of your students fosters independence and academic success.

Achieving Independence and Academic Success

According to Northouse (1997), situational leadership “focuses on leadership in situations” (p. 53). He goes on to say that it is composed of “both a directive and supportive dimension” (p. 53). In the classroom, there are times when the teacher is in charge of learning and when the students need to be in charge of their learning. In a classroom, in particular, an educator may only spend about 15-20 minutes teaching the components of the lesson. Some people may think it is the job of an educator to teach the students. However, they need to also foster and encourage skills to begin building that independence. They may only spend about 15 minutes teaching the math concept for the day; however they are giving them the basis for which the students can begin to build their independent learning habits. Then as the students are working and the educator can observe their independent practice, and may need to adjust their teaching of the concept and provide additional instruction to continue to foster the students’ independence and academic success. By allowing them to work more independently, the educator is fostering those skills needed to build independence they can continue to carry with them throughout their academic career.

In order for the students to gain independence and take risks, they need to be in charge of their learning with the guidance of the teacher. According to National Urban League (2009), the ability to read is fundamental to academic success. The first area a student in primary education can begin to gain independence and academic success is through reading. In classroom and educator may use guided reading groups five days a week. While they may have non-readers to fifth grade readers in a second grade classroom, they find it important the students pave their own way for reading success. The educator can give them the tools, activities, and

encouragement but it is ultimately their choice whether or not they want to become successful readers.

In addition to reading the educator can also have centers to encourage student independence and academic success. During center time students have choices of activities, tailored to their ability, to complete while the educator is working with reading groups. A majority of the students make the choice to complete all the activities, whether they like to do them or not. However, about 20% of the students will still choose not to complete all the activities, but will complete the ones that appeal to them. In order to encourage independence the educator has to reevaluate the tasks provided and adjust according to their level. The educator worked on establishing the routines for centers for about six weeks at the beginning of the year. The skills and relationships they gained during this time have carried over into other disciplines. If they want to establish math, science, or social studies centers to aid in their learning the framework has already been established. Using centers has encouraged students to become independent and achieve academic success.

Referring back to Army Leadership's definition of leadership as "the ability to influence other towards achieving goals" (2007, p. 1). Educators are providing their students with the tools needed to achieve a goal of independence as second graders while achieving academic success. The educators can spend their day in front of the students lecturing them about what they need to learn and why they need to learn. If they don't set the small goals in the classroom through leadership, like establishing a learning environment through procedures or building positive relationships, they cannot achieve the larger goals of guiding students toward independence which may result in academic success.

Conducting a Needs Assessment

Program Rationale

According to Meese (2001) reading is one of the most important skills to acquire in school, (as cited in Reed, Marchand-Martella, Martella, & Kolts). They elaborate to say that reading not only ties into writing, mathematics and core content activities, but it also determines continued academic success (Reed et al., 2001). In the Nevada Department of Education and the Clark County School District (CCSD) reading success is determined by meeting Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), as determined by state CRT scores. According to the NDE website the CCSD achieved AYP the last two years in reading, however Woolley Elementary School did not, falling 8% below the target goal.

Based on this research, this proposal is designed to address the literacy needs of students at Woolley Elementary School by providing quality training and adequate resources to teachers so they can offer effective reading instruction to all learners.

Program Overview

Successfully Teaching Anyone to Read (STAR) is designed for all teachers in grades 2-5 to develop effective teaching strategies and resources to deliver phonics instruction to non-readers. This program would offer one month of training, meeting at the school-site once a week to develop teaching strategies for the five areas critical to the success of beginning readers. These areas include: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension.

As a result of STAR, the teacher will be able to assess their students for reading success and interventions needed in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary and comprehension. As a result of STAR, teachers will also be able to effectively plan differentiated

reading instruction to build these skills. The students will be able to work with age-appropriate materials to build the skills they may lack in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. By building these skills students can begin to achieve reading success that will enable them to succeed in all subject areas, thus building their self-confidence as a learner as well as a person.

Overview of Budget

The following is the project cost and funding for Successfully Teaching Anyone to Read (STAR):

- 5 days of training (1 hour per session) for 25 teachers at \$30.00/hour. Total: \$3750
- 25 packets of resource materials at \$35 per packet. Total: \$875
- 25 binders at \$2 per binder. Total: \$50
- Total cost of the project: \$4675

Assessment Rationale

According to Leung (2001), self-administered questionnaires preserve confidentiality, while interviews can provide clarification of ambiguity. Questions were formulated with an open-ended response in mind. Furthermore Leung states this allows an exploration of all ranges and abilities of participant.

When constructing the questionnaire, the questions focused on the comfort level of the teachers to effectively deliver instruction in the five critical areas of reading success. Those areas were: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension.

Assessment Pool

The questionnaire was administered to second thru fifth grade teachers with varying years of teaching experience, as well as the English Language Learner (ELL) Specialist. All

participants answered the questions independently and then I met with each participant in their classrooms to discuss their answers. They were assured the questionnaire and their results would be confidential.

Needs Assessment Results

Assessment results from classroom teachers. The questionnaire was administered (See Appendix A) to three classroom teachers in second, third, and fourth grade. In response to *What is your comfort level of teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension*, two teachers responded they felt they were not at all comfortable at all and the other teacher responded they felt very comfortable teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension.. Participants were also asked *Why they felt this way about teaching these five critical areas*. All three teachers conceded that “both these skills have disappeared from the home and it now solely relies on kindergarten and first grade teachers to teach these skills (personal communication, March 23, 2009). In addition, the second grade teacher elaborated ”by the time the students leave kindergarten they should be familiar with word by word and sentence by sentence structure” (personal communication, March 23, 2009). This teacher goes on to further state “this strategy allows them to have a building block to become fluent readers” (personal communication).

Assessment results from the ELL specialist. A questionnaire was also administered (See Appendix B) to the ELL Specialist to evaluate the need of this program in a regular education setting at Woolley Elementary School. The ELL Specialist meets with 25 students to build on the five critical areas to assist students in becoming fluent readers. This instruction is in addition to the intervention the regular education teacher provides the students. In response to *Do your students receive this intervention within their classroom*, the ELL Specialist answered, “most of

my students do not receive this intervention (personal communication, March 24, 2009). She goes on to state “they truly don’t understand that intervention is 30 minutes on top of the 90 minutes of reading that all students are required to have daily” (personal communication). When then asked *Would it be beneficial for the teachers to have the resources with phonics kit for each of the five critical areas*, the ELL Specialist stated “it would be beneficial as long as they utilize the kits” (personal communication).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the questionnaire, the following would be included in the training:

- A teacher resource kit to include resources to support the five critical areas for reading success: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and text comprehensions.
- Staff development for teachers in grade two through five prior to the beginning of the school year

In addition, it would include a mentor teaching component to ensure the continued success and sustainability of the program. This would provide a resource and support system for teachers to ensure the reading success of all students.

Essentials of the Professional Development

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As a result of STAR, the teacher will be able to assess their students for reading success and interventions needed in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary and comprehension. As a result of STAR, teachers will also be able to effectively plan differentiated reading instruction to build these skills. The students will be able to work with age-appropriate materials to build the skills they may lack in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. By building these skills students can begin to achieve reading success that will enable them to succeed in all subject areas, thus building their self-confidence as a learner as well as a person.

Recruitment of Teachers

This program would be provided to and required of all teachers within Woolley Elementary School in grades 2-5. The trainings would begin in October and be offered multiple times throughout the year with a targeted completion would be by January. Teachers would be provided with mentor(s) to monitor their progress and assist with any questions they may have with the program. Upon successful completion of the program, teachers would have the opportunity to elect for a stipend or PDE credit.

Implementation of Program

The program would be implemented over the course of five weeks with training one day a week for two hours (See Appendix C). After each week training the teacher would be required to apply the resources they have obtained to their students' learning and report on their results. This implementation would take place within their differentiated reading instruction and administered through weekly progress monitoring through DIBELS.

Preparation for Program

Prior to the teachers starting the program they would have to test their student within reading using DIBELS. DIBELS assesses student's achievement in each area of the STAR program. They fill out the assessment profile (See Appendix D), which will help them determine areas of differentiated reading instruction.

The participants would be provided with a power point presentation (See Appendix E) of the training. Within this presentation links will be provided from the Florida Center for Reading Research to materials that present students with interactive, engaging center activities to reinforce the concept being taught.

Application of Program

Upon completion of the program, teacher will be required to administer and monitor the students reading success for a minimum of 8 weeks. During this time, the teacher would utilize their mentor for questions or advice of the program. The teacher will progress monitor their identified student once per week and report back progress to their mentor. If significant progress is achieved then the instruction would continue. However, if the minimal or no progress is seen, then the mentor and teacher would collaborate on additional interventions to be applied to the differentiated instruction already being utilized through STAR.

Culmination

Upon completion of the STAR program, teacher would continue to utilize the resources, if needed, for differentiated instruction. At the beginning of each school year the teacher would be provided with a refresher training during the first three days of the school year. New teachers would be provided with the training at their new teacher orientation held before the beginning of the school year. Each year teachers would be required to assess their students using the DIBELS

assessment. They would then provide a course of action as it relates to the five areas of STAR that is needed for any struggling readers.

Conclusion

In the Nevada Department of Education and the Clark County School District (CCSD) reading success is determined by meeting Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), as determined by state CRT scores. According to the NDE website the CCSD achieved AYP the last two years in reading, however Woolley Elementary School did not, falling 8% below the target goal. In response to this information the TARS program can be a beneficial tool to assist Woolley students in achieving and exceeding AYP for the upcoming years.

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Appendix A

Reading Interventions for Non-Readers Second thru Fifth Grades

The following is a survey to determine your level of comfort teaching the five areas of instruction critical to beginning readers. For each question circle only one answer. Answers are based on the Likert Scale. If you are least comfortable you would circle 1 and if you are the most comfortable you would circle 5. All surveys will remain anonymous and be used for research purposes only. Thank you for your participation.

1. How comfortable do you feel you are to teach phonemic awareness and phonics to your struggling or non-readers?

Least Comfortable 1 2 3 4 5 Most Comfortable

2. Why do you feel this way about teaching phonemic awareness and phonics? What background do you have in these areas? What areas would like either training or more resources for?

3. How comfortable do you feel you are to teach fluency to your struggling or non-readers?

Least Comfortable 1 2 3 4 5 Most Comfortable

4. Why do you feel this way about teaching fluency? What background do you have in these areas? What areas would like either training or more resources for?

5. How comfortable do you feel you are to teach vocabulary and comprehension to your struggling or non-readers?

Least Comfortable 1 2 3 4 5 Most Comfortable

6. Why do you feel this way about teaching vocabulary and comprehension? What background do you have in this area? What areas would like either training or more resources for?

Appendix C

STAR Agenda; Woolley Elementary School

Tuesdays 3:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m.

1. Week One: Program Overview & Pre-Assessment
 - a. What is TARS?
 - b. How can you and your students benefit from TARS?
 - c. Overall Goal of TARS
 - d. Assessment using DIBELS

2. Week Two-Phonemic Awareness
 - a. Phoneme Matching & Isolating
 - b. Phoneme Blending & Segmenting
 - c. Phoneme Manipulation

3. Week Three-Phonics
 - a. Letter-Sound Correspondence
 - b. High Frequency Words
 - c. Variant Correspondences
 - d. Syllable Patterns
 - e. Morpheme Structures

4. Week Four-Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension
5. Week Five-Application to Student Learning

Appendix D
STAR Assessment Profile

Student _____
Grade _____
Initial Sounds _____ Nonsense Word Fluency _____
Oral Reading Fluency _____ Comprehension _____

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Grade _____
Initial Sounds _____ Nonsense Word Fluency _____
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Student _____
Grade _____
Initial Sounds _____ Nonsense Word Fluency _____
Oral Reading Fluency _____ Comprehension _____

Appendix E
STAR PowerPoint Presentation

Successfully Teaching All to Read

Reading Success at Woolley

- According to the NDE website the CCSD

Phonemic Awareness

Part Two-Phoneme Blending & Segmenting

- > **Blending:** What word is made up of the sounds /k/ /a/ /t/? "cat"
- > **Phonemic segmentation:** What are the sounds in "cat"? /k/ /a/ /t/

Part Three-Phoneme Manipulation

- > **Phoneme manipulation:** What word would you have if you changed the /t/ in cat to an /n/? "can"

Phonics is...

- The ability to associate sounds with letters and use these sounds to form words.
- > Letter-Sound Correspondence
 - Short-vowel sounds and consonant sounds.
 - Two-letter blends (ie b + a = ba)
 - Three-letter blends (ie ba + t = bat)
 - Digraphs (ch, sh, th, wh, ng, nk) and three-letter consonant blends
- > High Frequency Words
 - Include sight words

Phonics

- > Variant Correspondences
 - Long-vowel sounds
 - R-controlled vowel sounds
 - Diphthongs (ie /oi/ and /ow/)
 - /s/ spelled c
 - /j/ spelled g, ge, dge
 - /f/ spelled ph
 - /k/ spelled ch
 - /ch/ spelled ch
- > Syllable Patterns
 - Word Families
- > Morpheme Structures

Fluency is...

- The effortless, automatic ability to read words in connected text.
- Building fluency using decodable books.
 - > Letter Sounds and Word Parts
 - > Words
 - > Phrases and Chunked Text
 - > Connected Text
- Begin introducing "easy-to-read" books.

Vocabulary is...

- Word Knowledge
- Morphemic Elements
- Word Meaning
- Word Analysis
- Words in Context

Comprehension is...

- The complex cognitive process involving the intentional interaction between reader and text to convey meaning.
 - > Narrative Text Structure
 - > Expository Text Structure
 - > Text Analysis
 - > Monitoring for Understanding

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