Title 1 "Focus School" Sees Exponential Literacy Gains in just several months

Lincoln Elementary, Bethlehem, PA . . . and Step By Step Learning®

After just several months of a MTSS process implementation with K-1, which included personalized, in-classroom modeling and coaching, the Science of Teaching Reading content training, Connecting to the Classroom® sessions, and multi-tier system and support (MTSS) protocols, there already has been unprecedented RESULTS in students' reading, writing and spelling skills.

Lincoln Elementary’s Kindergarten results speak for themselves.

Achieving such impressive results in such a short time is not easy, particularly with the demographic make-up of the school’s youngest students. Such achievement requires dedication and commitment and a willingness to think and act differently in the classroom. Pam Hill, a consultant with Step By Step Learning®, said, “The teachers at Lincoln Elementary have been open to the possibility of positive change from the first day we met. They have a strong desire to help improve their students’ literacy skills and trusted that we could help them. Their willingness to learn new information about how to teach reading, take risks in trying new (and sometimes uncomfortable) unfamiliar instructional strategies, and be open to constructive feedback has been the key to early and significant success for their students. “Teachers can sometimes be nervous about trying new things in their classrooms because they don’t want the kids to fail, but they soon learned that by making slight modifications to their teaching approaches, they can achieve significant quantifiable improvements in their students' understanding and retention. The methodologies taught by the in-classroom Step By Step Learning® consultants allow teachers to actively use the data they collect for each child and focus on the academic growth of all students.”

Some challenges that were specific to Lincoln Elementary included the use of multiple literacy programs during classroom instruction that were detached from each other. Phonics instruction was isolated from text reading, and text reading was not supported by the vocabulary lessons, for example. The Step By Step Learning® team reviewed these programs and recommended ways to make them more cohesive and complimentary instead of uncoordinated. Additionally, a science-based approach was presented to the teachers that outlined the significant milestones that each student should master by mid-year and end-of-year, enabling them to adjust the timing or techniques in their teaching to help each student reach his/her literacy goals. Ms. Hill commented, “We are teaching with the end in mind. Our teachers are now asking themselves, ‘what do I need to teach in November to meet these goals in January?’ They are realigning their pacing to meet the program stretch-goals and surpass the general grade-level standards.”

If you are ready to implement a comprehensive MTSS process that significantly raises achievement for ALL students, contact Step By Step Learning® at info@sbsl.org or 610-398-1231.
The Bethlehem Area School District partnered with Step By Step Learning® specifically for the company’s expertise in school improvement. The Bethlehem Area School District is the sixth largest in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania with sixteen neighborhood elementary schools serving grades K-5. Step By Step Learning®, designed and implemented an innovative, evidence-supported MTSS methodology that significantly and permanently improves student achievement and teacher effectiveness. Step By Step Learning® performed a systems and processes audit (Gap Analysis), and focused on building a collaborative culture. In its first year of implementation, the teachers witnessed a 40% gain in real improvement of their students’ reading, writing, spelling and comprehension.

Prior to Step By Step Learning®’s involvement only 47% of students were at grade level at the end of the year. In 2016, the first year of the implementation, kindergarten students reached 90% at end of the year benchmark. No other previous year has seen an increase close to that.

Lincoln Elementary, with over 60% of the student population struggling with poverty and English as their second language, has managed to reach its goal at mid year and is projecting to attain 90%+ in both kindergarten and 1st grades at the end of year benchmark period. The dramatic and sustainable results are occurring through the integration of a highly collaborative, structured, and a customized MTSS process created and delivered by Step By Step Learning® consultants. With approximately 215 students in the school, the student population is predominantly Hispanic (54%) compared to other schools in the district that average around 30%.

With nearly 15 years of in-classroom experience with teachers, Step By Step Learning® is recognized as the preeminent educational and literacy organization that achieves positive sustainable results in schools, benefiting every child. Utilizing proven evidence-based methodologies, the Step By Step Learning® team was tasked to:

- Design and implement a data review process that includes collection, analysis, evaluation, and interpretation of student data to identify students at risk for reading failure
- Plan the instructional support that is needed to improve students’ reading skills.
- Provide professional development to teachers that would deepen their knowledge in the science of teaching reading and enhance teachers’ instructional techniques to promote more active student learning.

Since September of the 2014 school-year, the team has been working with kindergarten, first grade, and second grade teachers to increase their knowledge and understanding surrounding the science of teaching reading to young children, and how to collect, interpret, and understand student data. Teachers are benefiting from customized lesson plans and classroom engagement techniques that help strengthen their instruction and effectiveness.

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