

# DOINGWHATWORKS



Video

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

## Benchmark Assessment and Data-Sharing

Pocomoke Middle School, Maryland • February 2009

Topic: Adolescent Literacy

Practice: Intensive Intervention

### Highlights

- Pocomoke Middle School has implemented a schoolwide literacy plan that includes a benchmarking system, ongoing screening and assessment, and flexible instructional groupings and intervention programs for struggling students.
- Faith Giddens, Curriculum Planner and Testing Coordinator, discusses how staff plan instruction informed by assessment data and provide reading interventions delivered through targeted classroom instruction and supplemental reading classes depending on student need.
- Teacher collaboration is a central part of assessment and planning at Pocomoke, and staff review student work as a team and participate in data-sharing meetings.
- Students participate in goal-setting through self-reflection and the development of individual plans of action.
- Student Success Plans are prepared by teachers and reviewed by an instructional team to identify strategies that will help students meet mastery goals.

## About the Site

### Pocomoke Middle School

### Pocomoke City, MD

#### Demographics

49% White

47% Black

2% Hispanic

1% Asian

1% Native American

56% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

0% English Language Learners

12% Special Education

Pocomoke Middle School takes a schoolwide approach to meeting the needs of each of their students. Vocabulary instruction, comprehension strategies, and learning aids such as graphic organizers are a part of every content area classroom. Pocomoke staff work together to improve students' reading skills through:

- Adopting a schoolwide emphasis on vocabulary instruction;
- Training content teachers and implementing explicit literacy instruction across all subject areas, including science, social studies, math, and art;
- Using graphic organizers across the content areas to support the development of reading comprehension;
- Engaging students in text discussion to promote higher levels of understanding;
- Supporting staff collaboration through student work review discussions;
- Using assessment data to identify needs and inform instruction for struggling readers; and
- Providing reading interventions for students reading below grade level through targeted classroom instruction and supplemental reading classes designed to meet the needs of students requiring more intensive interventions.

## Full Transcript

My name is Faith Giddens, and I'm the Curriculum Planner and Testing Coordinator for Pocomoke Middle School. I also oversee the ILA [Integrated Language Arts] program here in the school, which encompasses grades 6, 7, 8 as well as 4 and 5.

It is important when we're looking for ways to address the needs of our students that are struggling in reading, that we look at the entire student, we look at every aspect of data that we have available. That

data includes benchmarks, as well as classroom assessments, state assessments, and other assessments.

Our benchmarking system is throughout all content areas. There are two given before we take our actual state test in grades 6,7 and 8 ILA classes. That benchmark information is then used to determine whether or not we need to make adjustments for our students in terms of some of the interventions we provide, whether some students need to move to enrichment-type classes, and also whether or not we need to make adjustments in terms of a student's schedule completely.

Response to Intervention [RTI] is so important here at Pocomoke Middle School. One of the things that we've done is to include three primary sources of interventions in our middle school. They focus on different areas in terms of reading, but they allow students to be successful. One of the key components is that not only do we focus on the intervention, but the intervention components are carried into the classrooms as well.

In order for us to respond to intervention, the principal decided that she needed to make some adjustments in the schedule. Making those adjustments allowed us time to collaborate with each other, to actually have common planning times, to actually have those times to gather activities for the students, to actually look at the data that's been presented to us, and to make changes and modifications. And one of the things that's been so great is that it does allow us time to reflect on the students in the intervention programs so that we can easily move students in and out of the programs in order to reach more of the student body.

The good thing with the intervention programs is that they're flexible. They're always changing. Students know why they are in the intervention program. Teachers understand that students need the opportunity to grow. We need that time outside of the regular 90-minute class period. A student that receives interventions spends 90 minutes of their time in their regular ILA classroom, which is Integrated Language Arts classroom. They spend an additional 45 minutes with an intervention teacher. Sometimes we have students that are in two interventions at once. Again, even when students are in the two interventions, there's a possibility that they can leave in one at the end of the first quarter and remain in the other. It just depends on the student's need. Our students are actually excited about being in the intervention because it's something that they are successful at, and they know that it's an opportunity for them to move and grow and learn and be successful in the general education classroom.

One of the benefits of being in the intervention group is that you have that small class size, much smaller than the general ed population. In an intervention class, the ratio and the teacher in a generalized setting would be maybe 1:20, as compared to the intervention where it could be 1:5 and 1:7, which makes a difference in a student actually learning and getting that attention they need. We also provide time for goal setting which allows students to focus: "Where do I want to be two weeks from now, a month from now? What do I want to see in my growth, in my progress? How can I get there? What's my plan of action?"

Worcester County has done a magnificent job in terms of making sure that our staff is fully trained in what they're expected to instruct students in. Each person who is responsible for teaching one of the interventions goes through a process of training, both outside of the county level with professional trainers

and consultants, as well as additional training where the consultants come here. The consultants then observe the staff in their involvement with the kids. They give them comments and feedback and actually become their coaches for the program. The teachers complete a goal on their plan of action, which is a plan of success for the student. That plan of action says, I want to move my child or my student to this level by this date. They constantly diagnose and assess students' work either from the benchmarks or from classroom assessments and observation. And then they're reflected upon by the teacher and the committee as well. So, there are various people that are sitting on this decision-making. It's not just one person looking at the child; it's a team effort.

We have a student here that reminds me of just how successful and powerful intervention can be. The student is actually in two interventions right now outside of the general education classroom. The student has gained over 100 points on his state assessment, which is powerful. And when the conversation was held with him about his progress this summer, he was just ecstatic. He just couldn't believe it. And that lets us know that what we're doing is working.