

# DOINGWHATWORKS



Video

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

## Teachers Implement Changes to Improve Instruction

Hardy Elementary School, Tennessee • August 2008

Topic: Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools

Practice: Focus on Instruction

### Highlights

- This school has instituted a school-wide two-hour literacy block to help improve reading skills.
- The school uses state performance measures to shape its curriculum, and includes literacy components in all subject areas—not just language arts.
- One teacher uses within-classroom centers to differentiate instruction and teach different skill sets.

### About the Site

Hardy Elementary School  
Chattanooga, TN

### Demographics

97% Black

3% White

100% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

Several practices helped Hardy Elementary School go from being the worst to the top among the elementary schools in the state of Tennessee:

- A new principal bringing in a new vision and approach
- New teachers
- Targeted professional development to establish a schoolwide set of instructional strategies
- A clearly articulated lesson plan structure
- A balanced literacy program
- Regular use of student assessment data that included monitoring and adjusting instruction based on a careful analysis of data
- New school building
- Clear behavior expectations from all students and school staff

## Full Transcript

Lindy Blazek: My name is Lindy Blazek. I teach a comprehensive development class of developmentally delayed students, ages five and a half through seven.

Blazek: What's this big word? What are we talking about? We're talking about the...

Student: Sunny.

Blazek: What is it though? Sunny is what?

Student: Weather

Blazek: The weather! Thank you, Edna.

Blazek: One of the primary things we did was we went to a two-hour literacy block that's sacred throughout the school. Everybody does literacy for the first two hours of school, and it's uninterrupted. And we do a lot of oral language, all different reading strategies. We pull in—our related arts teachers pull in literacy through their subject. The computer labs are all working on literacy; everybody works on literacy. That was one of our first constructs.

My kids love books. I have books all over the room. I have a basket of books that's specifically related to the topic I am talking about. And when they come in in the morning, they hang their things up, and they go straight for the books. I have nonfiction books and fiction books as well. They don't care. They love to look at the books. They move left to right in the books. They trace the text, and they get together and they talk to each other about the books, and they make up stories as they go, all of which is a very important part of literacy. So, I have tons and tons of books.

Jennifer Hartley: Now repeat after me, clapping your syllables, okay? Pleasant.

Class: Pleasant.

Hartley: Marvelous.

Class: Marvelous.

Hartley: My name is Jennifer Hartley. I am a fifth grade literacy teacher. We have SPI, Standard Performance Indicators, through Tennessee, and we focus on those throughout the building, and what happens in each grade level is we use those to focus our planning. And with literacy, I can choose stories through my book, and then I go to social studies, and the social studies teacher in my team will focus on the same type of events. So, if she is teaching Civil War, I would be teaching Civil War at the same time. And same thing with Math, if they are working on word stories, I can pull in math in my classroom. So, we align ourselves to where the students are getting it in every classroom that they go to.

Hartley: Somebody tell me the difference between a fiction and a non-fiction story. Tevon?

Tevon: A fiction is a story that's fake, and it's like a fairy tale. And a non-fiction is a story that's true, like a biography.

Dustin Dotzler: We are going to be looking at these flash cards because on these flash cards, we have music that you are going to have to read.

My name is Dustin Dotzler, and I am a pre-K to fifth grade music teacher. One of the ways that my classroom has evolved is that I have incorporated a lot of other curriculum into my area. One of the things that our school has was we developed curriculum maps that led the way and told us where we need to go throughout the year. I took the curriculum maps from the grade levels, and I used what they were doing, and I created my curriculum that ties in with theirs. One of the subject areas in second grade was rainbows, and so I brought into my classroom songs about rainbows. We tied it in where they could see what it was. They tried to kinesthetically move in the shape of a rainbow and things that tied their curriculum to mine.

Another area that really was a big topic for me was differentiation. And when I was able to figure out that centers can be used in a music classroom and that I can use differentiation to teach different skill sets on the same subject matter, it really opened a lot of possibilities for me. In my centers, I will have them listen to songs, have them spell out instrument names, have them research instruments. They're able to experience a lot of wide variety of things and still all about my one topic. I'll work with a group myself, and it just opened up a whole lot of possibilities and gave my kids greater depth in the subject matter that we were studying.

Dotzler: We are going to be looking at some books that are about instruments. In the *Missing Violin*, it's going to be talking about some children and a violin.

Dotzler: One of the pieces that I have brought into my music classroom is literacy and reading. I have a center that has books that relate to my subject matter, such as jazz. When we are talking about jazz and listening to it, I also send the kids to a center so that they can read stories about jazz, whether it's fiction or

nonfiction, and I have one of my favorite books is a story about a jazz musician. So the kids not only hear it, but can see it and can read stories about it, and I really have tried to enrich my curriculum through the use of literacy.

Hartley: Some of the specific strategies I use in the classroom are things where they get the students talking in my room. I do not have a quiet classroom. If you come in my room, they're almost always talking. One of the things I like to do is Think-Pair-Share where after we read something, they have to think about it, then they turn to their neighbor and they share what they think, and then as a whole group, we are going to share that again. So, just little things like that where it gets the kids talking is a big help.

Dotzler: One of the issues that the teachers brought up from data was that our kids were having issues with noun, verbs and adjectives. They did not have enough in their vocabulary. So, this was one area that I brought to my music classroom that I have a noun/verb/adjective chart where we are building words for these kids to use. And I actually give them points if they can use the words correctly in a sentence with me. We are building adjectives, not just music words, but words that they can use in their writing and that they see in their reading all the time, trying to help these kids build their vocabulary that is so lacking.