DOINGWHATWORKS

River Ridge Elementary School

2772 Amsterdam Road
Villa Hills, Kentucky 41017
Principal: Shawna Harney

River Ridge Elementary is the largest elementary school in northern Kentucky's Kenton County School District. River Ridge serves approximately 950 students in grades pre-K–5. The school houses several regional and district programs that serve special student populations: a school for the deaf, two autism programs, and one gifted and talented program. Therefore, special education students comprise 26% of the student population.

- ♦ Elementary (pre-K–5)
- ♦ 91% White
- ♦ 3% Hispanic
- ♦ 3% Black
- ♦ 1% Asian
- ♦ 39% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch
- ♦ 26% Special Education
- ♦ 10% English Language Learners

River Ridge was created in 1996 through the merger of a primary and an intermediate school. At that time, staff began to develop their data-driven instructional decision-making skills. The school maintains a yearly improvement plan that includes specific strategies for growth, instructional planning policies, and learning targets. Teachers post the learning targets in classrooms to provide clear expectations and goals for students.

Collaboration for Data Use

To support a cycle of instructional improvement, the principal and assistant principals provide leadership to the Student Assistance Team (SAT). The SAT consists of counseling staff and teachers. The mission of the SAT is to reduce learning barriers and respond quickly to the needs of individual students who are not making progress.

Teachers refer students to the SAT when diagnostic assessments and ongoing progress monitoring reveal a need or area of weakness. The school uses a standard referral form to record student identification information, areas of concern (e.g., academic, social, communication, and health), English language proficiency, special talents, and current interventions. During SAT meetings, the team may review referrals of several students who have similar problems. The meetings allow the team to examine multiple sources of data, identify specific areas of weakness, and determine appropriate interventions for each student. The principal notes that this process is "very intentional as to when and how to set up [interventions], but particulars [are] based on student's needs."

To assess their effectiveness, interventions are combined with regular progress monitoring. In common planning time, teachers revisit data to make necessary adjustments in students' intervention plans. Teachers also maintain an Instructional Integrity Checklist to document the daily lesson, length of instructional time, specific strategies used, and comments. The checklist is reviewed in subsequent SAT meetings to inform adjustments in instruction and intervention plans.

Supports for Data Use

Aside from the SAT process, school leaders provide staff with several supports. The Progress Pad is a dedicated room for data analysis and hosts the SAT meetings. Each classroom has a pocket chart. Teachers record students' diagnostic and progress-monitoring assessment results on cards and then place the cards into color-coded zones of the chart. Red means that scores are significantly below the benchmark; yellow means that scores are slightly below the benchmark; and green means that scores meet or exceed the benchmark. For students whose scores place them in the yellow and red zones, teachers note current interventions on the back of the card. As students progress and meet the benchmark, teachers move their cards to the yellow or green zones. When teachers meet to discuss data, the pocket charts provide a quick visual reference of student progress for the class as a whole.

The leadership team also provides teachers with data notebooks for compiling and accessing data. Each student's notebook includes report cards, midterm reports, parent-teacher communications, the Instructional Integrity Checklist, and a data tracking sheet. The tracking sheet outlines diagnostic test scores and any special services for the student. The principal noted, "It's really a collective representation of data of that child, so that teachers are not looking in various places for different scores. And it also serves to show trend data over the school year, so that we can begin to look holistically at the child in terms of how [he or she is] progressing."

Student Use of Data

Students are also active participants in using data and setting classroom and individual goals. They look at class test scores and discuss with teachers how to improve as a class. Students also look at their own data to set personal learning goals. Fourth- and fifth-grade students learn to graph data and interpret changes in their scores. Students also keep a data folder to chart their progress.

The principal indicated that these tools—the SAT process, the Progress Pad, data notebooks, and student use of data—help to support a culture of data use, foster greater accountability among staff, and motivate students.