DOINGWHATWORKS

VIDEO
4:59 min

Full Details and Transcript

Building Trustful Relationships: The Home-School Connection

Southern Local Jr./Sr. High School, Ohio
January 2014

Topic

TURNING AROUND CHRONICALLY LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

Highlights

- Southern Local Jr./Sr. High School focused on building home-school connections and trustful relationships with the community.
- One of the main challenges of the school has been to let students know there are options after high school beyond the local agricultural jobs.
- The school has become a hub of the community.
- Students have opportunities to take courses at the community college.

About the Site

Southern Local Jr./Sr. High School
Salineville, Ohio

Demographics

(Source: Southern Local School District, 2014-15)

- Grades 7—12
- 457 students
- 97% White
- 3% Other
- 19% Special Education

- 54% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch
- Rural

- In 2009, Southern Local Jr./Sr. High School was identified as one of Ohio's persistently lowest-achieving schools and began to implement the Ohio Improvement Process. In July 2011, the school received a School Improvement Grant.
- The school developed Teacher-Based Teams and a Building Leadership Team to engage teachers in the turnaround process. The teams began to systematically collect and analyze data to strengthen teaching and learning.
- The principal and associate principal began to conduct instructional walkthroughs known as Rounds. Through these walkthroughs, coupled with data analyses, the administrators and staff selected areas for professional development.
- The school expanded its use of technology and provided a digital period for remediation and increased opportunities for course taking through community college and university partnerships.

Full Transcript

00:04 My name is Danielle Butler. I'm a transformation specialist with the Ohio Department of Education.

00:10 I'm Dallas Saunders, associate principal of Southern Local Jr./Sr. High School.

Danielle Butler

00:14 In my role as a transformation specialist working with a rural school, some of the things that I've seen put in place here are large components of the School Improvement Grant. One of the components is parent and community involvement. And working with the principals of schools that are in school improvement, it's very important that we build a trustful relationship, because they have to trust the things that we're telling them to do will improve schools. Another component of the grant would be extended learning time. So in that extended learning time, they at Southern Local were able to create a digital period. That period created the opportunity for

them to have enrichment courses that they wouldn't otherwise have. It also created the opportunity for them to have credit recovery for those students who may need that extra push in order to graduate. So a lot of the components of the grant are assisting with building that community and that community piece here at Southern Local.

Dallas Saunders

01:11 The challenges that we face because of the cultural and financial issues we have in our region and with our students, the biggest piece that we have is the expectations of students in relationship to education. I have found that a lot of our students do not see themselves, envision themselves, or believe that they can go on to a higher education after high school. The culture is one in which some parents have graduated high school, some of their parents have graduated high school, some have not, and that is kind of the road that they are going to take. I think that our largest challenge as a staff in this school district is that whatever career path our students choose, it is our job to let them know that there are options and there are opportunities if they so choose to take those. There is a rural piece where we have a large number of students who are involved in agriculture through family, and that is their livelihood and it is a strong and tremendous livelihood to be part of. But they need to know that they have opportunities to participate in other things; there are other opportunities within life.

02:49 The biggest challenge is creating that culture within the community—that we can have a different future than what it has been. The industrial jobs are no longer what they were in our area. A lot of them have left and the opportunities are not there, so we need to offer our students other chances to create a life that is fulfilling and full of opportunity. And one way that we have done that is, we have tried to make—and I think successfully made—our school somewhat of the hub of this community. Students, parents will come to us for many different reasons of difficulties, challenges, as a resource—whether it be financial issues as far as not having clothing, getting involved with their lives on a personal level through helping families at Christmas time with food drives, with different

opportunities for health care, for counseling services. And I think that that, with us being able to make that home to school connection, you create the legitimacy and trust and an opportunity to have a genuine learning experience and offer all the programs that we try to offer—whether it be college- and career-ready curriculum, opportunities to take classes, our Seniors to Sophomores program where our seniors take classes at our local college—creates those opportunities because of the home-school connection. We have the trust with the teaching staff, the administration, and the home; and I think that is the largest challenge we face, is just the perception of what education is in this area.

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