



Success in Sight® raises achievement in North Carolina high school

The Challenge

When Northeast Guilford High School (NEHS), in McLeansville, North Carolina, was named as one of the state's 64 "turnaround schools" in 2007, it came as a wake-up call to the staff.

The school was operating like many high schools do—department chairs were managers but not instructional leaders, and teachers collaborated little with each other—but the state's requirement that it adopt a reform model forced action.

Strategic Solution

NEHS Principal Anita Walker chose McREL's Success in Sight as the school's model, and Principal Consultant Sammie Wheeler-Clouse spent the next year leading administrators, coaches, and teacher leaders through its five-step process.

With a focus on building teacher capacity, the staff chose to increase student engagement by implementing *Classroom Instruction that Works*® (CITW) strategies and supporting one another through professional learning communities (PLCs). Teachers developed a criteria list for how to identify student engagement during classroom observations, a new practice for NEHS staff that has set a high level of expectation and increased cross-departmental awareness of instruction that didn't exist before.

Results

Since McREL began working with NEHS, the school has undergone a huge cultural shift and made enormous strides in shared leadership, building collective efficacy, the use of instructional strategies, and increased capacity to implement and sustain change.

Each year student test scores have increased dramatically. From 2007–2010, 9th- and 10th-grade student proficiency levels indicated a yearly increase between 9 percent in some state-tested courses and 34 percent in others. In 2009, the Guilford County School District named NEHS one of the most improved schools in the district.

Next Steps

A strong focus on effective instruction continues throughout the whole school. The leadership team takes ownership of instruction and student achievement, resulting in staff members supporting each other through peer observations.

After two years of working with McREL, student achievement has increased, and NEHS has built capacity for high-level school improvement sustainability.

About McREL services for

Creating high-expectation, high-performance school cultures

McREL approaches school improvement one step at a time, helping create schools that not only set high expectations but also truly believe they can meet them. We get to know your school and build on what's working, helping you generate "quick wins" that boost your confidence and capacity, and then gradually increase the scope and impact of your improvement efforts in order to make significant, lasting change.

Your school, your solutions

We start with your data, helping you identify the root causes of achievement gaps and areas where you have the most opportunity to make meaningful changes. If possible, we help your school come up with a "stop-doing" list so that you can focus your efforts where they matter most. We help you generate realistic short- and long-term goals that allow you to become the kind of school you want to be and your students to become the kind of students they want to be.

The process

Starting with small improvements and building to large, comprehensive, school-wide reform, Success in Sight helps schools "think systemically and act systematically" by following a five-stage process:

- Taking stock
- Focusing on the right solution
- Taking collective action
- Monitoring and adjusting
- Maintaining momentum

Related services

School leaders set the tone for high expectations in schools and districts. McREL's **Balanced Leadership**[®] (mcrel.org/balancedleadership) guides principals, over a one- to three-year period, in getting their schools focused on doing the right things to improve student achievement, manage change effectively, and create school communities with cultures of high expectations.

For more information, visit mcrel.org/successinsight or mcrel.org/balancedleadership, or e-mail info@mcrel.org. For a free Success in Sight consultation, call 800.781.0156.

