



Sedalia Elementary becomes demonstration school for Success in Sight®

The Challenge

Sedalia Elementary, located just south of the Denver metro area in semi-rural Sedalia, Colorado, is a small, low-performing school that is part of Douglas County School District, a large, suburban district that is one of the state's highest performing. With a third of its students at the poverty level and almost 20 percent English-language learners, Sedalia was looking to reign in and reduce its widening achievement gap—and bring its achievement levels up to those of its peers in the district.

Strategic Solution

Principal George Boser knew of McREL's Success in Sight approach to school improvement from previous professional development he attended in the district. When Douglas County asked schools to identify themselves as types of schools, Boser came to McREL with the idea of making Sedalia a "Success in Sight" school. McREL and Sedalia formed a partnership, and McREL began delivering professional development on research-based instructional strategies to teachers in August 2010, with the initial goal of increasing writing proficiency and vocabulary among the school's 335 students.

Results

In just one year, writing scores on the state assessment for grades 3–6 increased six percent, from 52 percent to 58 percent. Sixth graders made the most dramatic improvement, with scores rising by 19 percent, from 53 to 72 percent. McREL and Sedalia had worked together

on several "fractals," or manageable change initiatives, focused on not only writing but also on new behaviors and strategies for teachers. "Teachers saw that when they made minor changes to how they taught, student achievement increased significantly," said Dana Frazee, McREL principal consultant. This realization, in turn, helped teachers change their perceptions of what their students were capable of learning.

They also learned the importance of using and collaborating on student achievement data to measure success. Teachers used a writing rubric, for example, based on Common Core State Standards, which included agreed-upon prompts that were used schoolwide. They then came together to score the tests, which helped them better understand exactly where their students needed to improve.

Next Steps

Sedalia is in its second year of the three-year Success in Sight approach. The school has committed to being a demonstration site for additional McREL programs, including Classroom Instruction that Works (CITW), CITW for English Language Learners, Balanced Leadership®, and Teaching Reading and Writing in the Content Areas. The partnership is a unique opportunity for McREL to deepen its knowledge and ability to help schools with similar challenges make and sustain improvements that lead to increased student achievement.

Creating high-expectation, high-performance school cultures

McREL helps schools improve from the inside out by starting small, with manageable change initiatives that generate quick results and build staff confidence in their ability to meet their goals. We don't ask you to start all over; rather, we get to know your school and build on what's working. This approach allows you to gradually increase the scope and impact of your efforts in order to make lasting, significant change.

Your school, your solutions

We start with your data, helping you identify the root causes of low performance and areas where you can make the most meaningful changes. We help your school focus on what matters most and stop doing those things that can distract you from reaching your goals. Together, we create short- and long-term goals that are realistic and will lead to the kind of success you and your students want and deserve.

The process

Success in Sight guides schools to higher performance by helping them “think systemically and act systematically.” Our five-stage process includes:

- 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**® 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/balanced_leadership or e-mail info@mcrel.org. For a free consultation, call 800.781.0156.

