

stories of
Innovation & Results



Classroom Instruction that Works® leads to middle school's transformation

The Challenge

North Valley Middle School (NVMS), located in a semi-rural school district in northern Colorado, was not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) or state assessment goals when it won a three-year Comprehensive School Improvement grant from the state. With a student population that was 50 percent Hispanic, a high turnover rate among teachers, and a high mobility rate among students, the school was struggling to find its focus, but it was determined to improve student achievement.

Strategic Solution

McREL's professional development around *Classroom Instruction that Works* brought "quick wins" and a positive new outlook that inspired staff members to work toward still greater improvement. Following their first-year focus on instructional strategies, they spent the second year developing a systematic approach to vocabulary instruction and the third working on differentiated instruction and standardized grading. Throughout their multi-year effort, NVMS, with McREL's guidance, kept its focus on building a culture of learning.

Results

NVMS experienced both tangible and intangible gains. The percentage of 6th graders demonstrating proficiency on state assessments rose from 57 to 59 percent in reading and from 48 to 59 percent in writing. The percentage of 8th graders testing at proficient levels rose from 36 to 56 percent. Most significantly, the Colorado Department of Education diagnostic growth summary showed that 8th graders who had entered NVMS at the outset of the work showed the most growth gains. The school has been transformed into one where a culture of high expectations pervades, a professional learning community thrives, instruction is consistent, and teachers feel confident to innovate in the classroom.

Next Steps

During the district convocation held before the 2008–2009 school year, the staff at NVMS was recognized and commended for its successes. The school continues to see achievement gains, and the staff remains committed to student achievement.

Guaranteeing challenging, engaging, and intentional instruction

Research shows that one of the most powerful influences on students' success is being taught by a teacher who challenges them, engages them, and skillfully commands a broad repertoire of teaching strategies. McREL workshops for teachers provide practical guidance on *what works* in the classroom and insights into *how, when, and why* it works.

Instruction that works for all learners

McREL's best-selling manual, *Classroom Instruction that Works* (CITW), identifies nine categories of instructional strategies that research says improve student learning. We offer workshops in the following four key areas to help teachers sharpen their instructional skills and develop a deep understanding of which strategies to use in particular situations:

- **CITW Basic and Advanced** workshops provide an overview of CITW strategies and the research behind them.
- **Using Technology with CITW** shows how to use technology with the strategies, embed technology into practice, and infuse your school's entire curriculum with technology.
- **CITW with English Language Learners (ELLs)** is an interactive workshop that shows how to modify the strategies for ELLs.
- **CITW in Secondary Science** shows how to apply the strategies, use science inquiry, and create learner-centered science classrooms.

McREL also delivers CITW through an online course and training-of-trainer sessions for professional developers.

Related services

McREL's **Power Walkthrough**® training and software helps school leaders observe and evaluate how teachers are teaching and students are learning, via a PDA, Tablet PC, BlackBerry, or iPhone loaded with software that uses CITW strategies as the basis for observations.

For more information, visit mcrel.org/citw or mcrel.org/powerwalkthrough, or e-mail info@mcrel.org.

