

Using data to drive instruction in 6th Grade ELA classrooms

By Nicole Stuart

When the school year started I knew it was important to use data to drive instruction in the classroom. During my graduate studies at Iona College, teachers in the special education and literacy program were taught to use data during practicum. Using this knowledge I gained in my graduate studies I knew I wanted to implement this type of instruction in my classroom.

In October the teacher leads had a meeting with Mr. Foley who showed us crucial data that was important to building our students skills and meeting the state mandates. I knew the first step in understanding where we stood as a middle school was to look at last year's middle school ELA data. After analyzing the middle school ELA state item analysis I discovered that our current 6th graders lacked 3 standards/skills according to state standards. One was defining characteristics of different genres, two recognizing how the author uses literary devices such a simile, metaphor, and personification create meaning, and three recognizing how new information is related to prior knowledge and experiences. I also analyzed last year 6th graders ELA data to determine what standards I needed to incorporate more into my curriculum this year. The three standards/skills were one determining the meaning of unfamiliar words by using context clue, a dictionary, or a glossary, two identifying different perspectives such as social, cultural, ethnic, and historical on an issue presented in one or more texts, and three reading, viewing and interpreting texts from a variety of genres. One standard/skill I found that was a school weakness in all three grades was determining the meaning of unfamiliar words by using context clue, a dictionary, or a glossary. Using this data the MS ELA teachers decided that

Several weeks went by focusing on these two topics and in February our school administered mid-terms. The 6th grade ELA mid-term focused on figurative language, characteristics of a memoir, author's purpose, characteristics of expository text, vocabulary, and comparing and contrasting two text (essay writing). According to the data from the mid-terms students demonstrated a 68% understanding of determining the meaning of an unfamiliar word through context, 74% understanding of figurative language, 82% understanding of author's purpose, and 75% understanding of characteristics of a memoir (genre).

The next steps in my Intervention Friday focus was to work on vocabulary. I decided the normal route I was taking with students was not working and I need a new way of teaching vocabulary to students. I collaborated with Ms. Bridga and Ms. Chad and we decided to make a vocabulary game. I adapted the game Balderdash to fit my student's needs and students now learned vocabulary through play.

Currently I am here now and plan to include one more intervention Friday day playing the game Balderdash with students then administering the vocabulary pre-assessment that was given in December to students as a post assessment to see where students have moved.

vocabulary need to be addressed in every classroom and each teacher developed their own unique way of addressing it.

I decided to implement "Intervention Friday" into my classroom. I explained to the students that Fridays were now designated to build on skills students were lacking. Student's response to "Intervention Friday" was positive. The first type of interventions I decided to focus on was figurative language and vocabulary. I administered a figurative language and vocabulary pre-assessment to determine where students stood in their understanding of two topics. After analyzing the data, I developed lessons where the class was split into two groups. Group one worked on vocabulary, understanding how to building meaning through context and group two worked on figurative language understanding how to identify similes, metaphors and personification. Three weeks of this instruction was using during "Intervention Friday".

Middle school students were assessed using the Acuity predictive assessment to determine what type of score they would receive on the ELA test this year. The data from this test determined that students had very little knowledge of what an author's purpose for writing texts are and still lacked skills identifying figurative language. Only 26% of students were able to identify the author's purpose on the test and 62% of students were able to determine figurative language. One positive aspect of this data showed that 80 percent of the students were able to select to correct answer when determining the meaning of an unfamiliar word using context clues. I showed students the data from the acuity spread sheet, and told students we are still going to be focusing on figurative language and now author's purpose during "Intervention Friday".