

Spotlight Strategy: Integrate Literacy and Numeracy Strategies into CTE

Forbes Road Career and Technology Center

The leadership team at Forbes Road Career and Technology Center (Forbes Road) recognizes the importance of infusing academic content into career and technical education (CTE) courses to provide students with a meaningful and rigorous education. With 90 percent of Forbes Road students failing to achieve at the proficient level on the state academic assessment PSSA and with only three of the nine sending school districts making AYP for the 2008-2009 school year, the team also realizes there is a critical need to improve student academic achievement.

To make integration a center-wide and sustainable practice, beginning in 2009-2010, the CTE instructors received ongoing, periodic professional development and support to learn and implement effective integration strategies. Forbes Road instructors participate in literacy workshops sponsored by the Bureau of CTE's Technical Assistance Program and the Allegheny Intermediate Unit as well as professional development sessions, such as MAX Teaching, which focus on specific integration strategies.

While various professional development sessions were offered on integration, the leadership team found that instructors still needed additional support to fully implement the strategies. In response to this need, the leadership team developed an in-house program to provide job-embedded training. Through this initiative, CTE instructors meet one-on-one with special education, math and English instructors on staff at Forbes Road. The special education instructors help CTE instructors prepare lessons that incorporate various learning strategies and that make accommodations for special education students. The academic instructors and CTE instructors collaborate to design lessons that integrate math and English content. For example, the academic teachers work bi-weekly with the technical staff to provide standards and PSSA examples for mathematics; the English and Social Studies instructor provides information on differentiated instruction.

Instructors meet during the daily hour and 15 minute planning period after school. When the leadership team first implemented this integration initiative, instructors met on a weekly basis. However, according to faculty input, the team realized that a one-week interval between meetings did not give the CTE instructors sufficient time to teach and reflect on the integrated lesson. As Mr. Balint stated, "Teachers needed time to do these lessons," and to analyze what did and did not work in the classroom. Instructors now conduct planning meetings every other week.

Over the pilot year, the program gained momentum and buy-in among staff and helped instructors improve their teaching strategies. As a result of positive feedback from staff, the leadership team plans to continue offering the program as a job-embedded professional development strategy. One initiative planned for the 2010-2011 school year is a curriculum consultant, who will work with technical instructors in updating curriculum to reflect Program of Studies Task Lists.

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Forbes Road Career and Technology Center is located in Monroeville, Pennsylvania. As a part-time career and technology center, it enrolls approximately 800 students in grades 9 through 12 and provides 17 career and technical education programs. Forbes Road serves 9 school districts. It offers a full-time youth apprenticeship program in which seniors, as well as some juniors, may participate.