

Chapter 11

Improving Classroom Management and Teacher Retention: A Needs Assessment

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This case explores how a needs assessment was conducted at a middle school experiencing high rates of teacher turnover. Pamela Frost, an experienced instructional designer, was assigned to assess the situation and identify opportunities to improve professional development opportunities for the teachers. As a part of a needs assessment, Pamela gathered data to address needs pertaining to classroom management challenges, teacher attrition rates, and establishing relations with the local community. This case explores how Pamela gathered data and triangulated her findings to determine what interventions were needed.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-0054-5.ch011

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Pamela Frost, an experienced teacher of 22 years, was not quite sure where to start when walking into Miller Middle School. She had recently been hired to lead programming initiatives for the professional development of the Miller Middle School's teachers. The school located in an urban city had been experiencing a record number of turnover amongst its teachers, averaging 47% every year for the past 10 years.

Miller Middle School is located in a metropolitan city and is made up of 800 students (48% female, 52% male), 40 certified teachers, one principal, three assistant principals (one for each grade level). Additional support staff includes 2 guidance counselors, 2 literacy coaches, 2 math coaches, a media specialist, a school psychologist, 1 part-time speech pathologist, 1 school nurse, and 25 non-certified staff including teacher assistants, cafeteria workers, and custodians/bus drivers.

The student body demographics are 40% Caucasian, 40% Hispanic, 15% African-American, 4% mixed race, and 1% Asian. A total of 70% of the student body receive free or reduced lunch at Miller Middle School. The percentage of proficient students with regard to standardized testing is alarmingly low (Table 1). Sadly, these numbers are not far from the rest of the state. On average, that are 15 students per day who serve an in-school suspension.

During her first week, Pamela met with Bryson Jackson, the school's principal. Bryson explained to Pamela that the school board was asking each school in the district to appoint a teacher who would be responsible for leading professional development programming that was customized to meet the needs of the teachers. The school district was still requiring teachers to participate in mandatory professional development activities, but they were charging schools with developing new programming efforts. The goal was to have teachers participating in 50% district-led initiatives and 50% customized initiatives.

Table 1. Percentage of proficient students in accordance with state standards

	6 th Grade	7 th Grade	8 th Grade
Math	41%	29%	29%
Reading	53%	45%	58%

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