

SCHOOL SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

Supporting Multilingual Learners and Supplemental Intervention Services

Partner North Thurston Public Schools

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Like many school districts across the country, North Thurston Public Schools is working to overcome the continuing impact of COVID-19 on student performance and district systems, processes, and capacity. The district, with more than 15,000 students in the South Puget Sound region of Washington state, is committed to systems-level improvement and to understanding the impact of services on student outcomes.

As North Thurston prepared for the adoption of new literacy curricula, it partnered with us to review its services for multilingual learners and students receiving supplemental intervention services through federal Title I funding and the state's Learning Assistance Program (LAP).

Building trust, understanding perspectives

To start our partnership with North Thurston Public Schools off right, we began with a process of building trust and laying the groundwork for ongoing collaboration. Step one was choosing a team that included members with local experience. Then, we spent time with district personnel to learn about their context. We researched the district's demographics and instructional structures. We also met in person with staff members, families, and students to further understand the work and perspectives of interest holders in the community.

To evaluate both North Thurston's multilingual learner and Title I/LAP programs, we:

Co-designed research questions and protocols with the district to ensure that we were observing and collecting data that matched its goals

Analyzed student academic data

Conducted classroom observations

Facilitated student, family, educator, and administrator focus groups

Through these activities, we were able to provide evidence-based recommendations for both programs. We also documented the intersecting and layered connections between the programs and their shared challenges. We examined student participation across programs and identified potential systemic shifts that may support student outcomes.

Aligning systems to support students

This work confirmed the positive impact of participation in Title I/LAP services on student academic growth in reading and math. The analysis also underscores the importance of continued training and professional development for educators and work on disproportional representation among student groups.

North Thurston has already initiated a study team to support internal capacity for collaboration on a multi-tiered system of supports. Educators will receive additional training on instructional strategies and pedagogy that supports student needs and will have additional data to inform their engagement in systems improvement. Going forward, the district will use what we learned through this work to better align systems in which students may receive multiple services impacting core instruction time and access.

“Our collaboration with Education Northwest has been an incredibly valuable experience. Their thorough review of our processes and procedures provided us with detailed feedback, insightful findings, and actionable recommendations that will help guide our work moving forward. The expertise and professionalism of the EDNW team were evident throughout the process, and their commitment to supporting our district was truly appreciated. This partnership has strengthened our ability to enhance our MTSS systems, ensuring we continue to provide the best possible support for our students, staff, and community. We are grateful for their partnership and look forward to implementing the improvements identified through this collaboration.”

– Tammy Alonzo, Director of Student Information and Intervention Systems