CASE STUDY

Washington D.C. High School shifts instructional strategies to reach all students' academic growth potential

Anacostia High School | Washington, D.C.

Overview

Anacostia High School math teachers shaped classroom instructional strategies to align with their students' cognitive strengths.

Challenge

In District of Columbia Public Schools, students at Anacostia High School were continuously struggling with reading and math. In 2021, only 15% of students were proficient in reading and only 10% in math. For years, Anacostia leaders and educators tried a variety of new initiatives focused on raising achievement, but saw limited results. Anacostia teachers struggled with "new initiative fatigue" and a lack of confidence in the potential of new programs making a difference for their student population.

School Profile

- 287 Students
- Grades 9-12
- 98% Black; 2% Hispanic
- 85% At Risk
- 72% FRL

> *MindPrint helped improve outcomes in one of the most vulnerable communities and gained support from even some of the most reluctant teachers, even during a pandemic. The AFT national leadership will continue to support and share your amazing efforts.*

Dr. Lisa Thomas

Associate Director, American Federation of Teachers

Solution

One dedicated Anacostia HS math teacher, Donald Thompson, Jr., secured a grant through the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the local Washington D.C. Teachers' Union Teacher Leaders Program to pilot a cutting-edge change recommendation in his school. Mr. Thompson selected MindPrint Learning to study how understanding cognitive skills impacts student academic success.

In Spring 2021, Anacostia HS implemented the MindPrint Assessment with 9th grade students. 9th Grade Math Teachers participated in bi-weekly PLCs led by MindPrint Learning specialists.

The PLCs focused on differentiating instruction based on group and individual student needs as determined by students' MindPrint data.

The MindPrint data, in combination with the school's achievement data, provided insight into why Anacostia students were underperforming their higher income peers and offered potential opportunities to meet students where they have the greatest need.

> *Unlike the other tests we use, [MindPrint] doesn't measure what students have learned. Instead, it measures how well they learn in different formats and identifies which format will be best for each of them. It sounded like the additional layer of insight we needed.*
>
> Don Thompson, Jr. | **Math Teacher and AFT Grant Lead**

Results

Teachers realized that their math students had clear strengths in visual thinking skills, notably as strong as students in high-performing schools. This was a new lens that resonated immediately with teachers because they now had a pathway to reach their students most effectively. MindPrint summary data also showed a high percentage of students with executive functions challenges. Since the skills where students disproportionately struggle are highly correlated with academic success, the PLCs helped teachers understand the primary needs of most of their students before focusing on individual learner variability. With MindPrint, the teachers understood how their students learn and adjusted their instructional strategies to meet students' learning strengths.

Based on MindPrint data, the PLCs primarily focused on two areas:

+ Providing teachers with clear strategies to address executive functions challenges by optimizing classroom structure, developing students' self-regulation, and increasing readiness to learn.
+ Providing teachers with more visual-based teaching approaches for students, including graphic organizers, images and visual aides.

Teachers utilized these strategies in their classrooms and their reflections suggested teachers were ready to adopt this new data-driven approach to inform their instructional practices.

> *"If we know how our students think and learn, we can tailor our instruction to them to create a more efficient learning environment."*
>
> **-9TH Grade Math Teacher**

Rather than focusing on student learning deficits, the MindPrint assessment was the first assessment that identified student learning strengths, which was key to building teacher belief in

Looking Ahead

Based on the strong positive feedback from teacher-leader Don Thompson and the math faculty, Anacostia adopted MindPrint schoolwide for the 2021-22 school year.

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MindPrint learning