



Beating the Odds(BTO): ELA Gains

Purpose of the 2019 BTO Project



- Identify schools that “beat the odds” by making significant gains in ELA while having high proportions of economically disadvantaged (ED) students, as evidenced by:
 - ▶ Level 3 or higher literacy TVAAS, and
 - ▶ Two consecutive years of increasing ELA proficiency/TNReady gains.
- Survey and conduct focus group of principals to identify and share key factors contributing to ELA success to share and improve District outcomes.

BTO Selected Schools



District-managed and charter schools that met these criteria are:

Aurora Collegiate Academy	Springdale Elementary	Central High
Belle Forest Elementary	Westside Elementary	City University School of Liberal Arts
Holmes Road Elementary	Colonial Middle	Memphis Rise Academy
Robert R. Church Elementary	Craigmont Middle	Whitehaven High
South Park Elementary		

Description of Schools and Principals



- 3 Optional, 3 EZone, 1 Priority, 1 Critical Focus, 2 Charter schools
- EZone schools and Critical Focus schools received extra funds
- Elementary schools range from 300-1100 students and secondary schools range from 500-1600 students
- Grade levels of largest ELA gains: 3rd & 4th , 6th & 7th, and 10th & 11th
- One to 15 years of experience as a principal at the school with gains and Three to 20 total years of experience as a principal
- 10+ years of experience as a teacher/instructional staff member

Key Factors Attributed to Success



- Focus on Knowing and Using Data
- Hiring Additional Staff
- Targeted Intervention
- Instructional Planning and Scheduling
- Instilling High Expectations in Students and Teachers
- Taking Risks

Theme 1: Focus on Knowing & Using Data



89% of Principals: Analyzing data allowed staff to identify potential knowledge gaps in academic standards for intervention.

- *“Implementing Tier 1 instruction & drilling down based on data in an effort to drill back up to what the student should know & be able to do.”*
- *“Creating our school-wide data days & student data trackers not only engaged the students, but parents on what they could do... to support their child’s learning at home.”*
- Elementary school principals said they have to study up on what’s appropriate as a teaching method for each concept and learn standards to be able to match teaching practices and student skills to them
- Secondary principals also reported that relationships with teachers and getting involved in the data work were key so that leaders can *“inspect what they expect”*

Theme 2: Hiring Additional Staff



Reallocating resources allowed principals to hire additional staff that coached teachers, reduced student-teacher ratio, aided in small group instruction, & provided students with more learning time.

- Principals identified the following as absolutely central to ELA success:
 - ▷ Teacher **collaboration** on instruction – 100.0%
 - ▷ Teacher **mentoring** – 77.8%
 - ▷ **PLC Coach** – 55.6%
- Using Title 1 funds, we hired a **full-time ELA Coach**... responsible for looking at data, creating PLCs, modeling teacher lessons, providing skills to unpack standards and aligned them with the task on the table.”
- Elementary and middle principals reported the importance of hiring **experienced, top teachers** who know content and can teach foundational skills when needed
- Secondary principals described hiring **more support staff** so that English teachers could just focus on planning and teaching

Theme 3: Targeted Intervention



Principals identified targeted interventions as a key influence toward improving ELA outcomes.

- About half of principals identified **online (44%)** and **RTI² small group intervention (56%)** as essential
- *“Utilizing our **data-directed intervention model** to intervene on student gaps on a weekly cycle”*
- Principals noted the **importance of teachers and students knowing the data and goals** on which students and what skill areas need to improve, so the whole school can achieve together
- Elementary and middle school principals reported **supplementing the curriculum with foundational skills teaching** and activities by using iReady, text materials they purchased, and RTI² small groups to help with grammar and reading comprehension

Theme 4: Instructional Planning & Scheduling



Customized school schedules and structured, regular meetings improved opportunities for instructional planning and professional development.

- *“We have utilized **common planning** with our testing areas and have structured PLC meetings twice a week.”*
- Elementary school principals relayed the importance of **customizing the school schedule** to have a reading block/time set aside to focus on areas where students need the most help
- All principals described adapting schedules to **provide time for teachers to get PD, work with PLC coach, and to collaborate and mentor** each other by practicing and getting feedback

Theme 5: Instilling High Expectations



Principals explained the importance of instilling high expectations in students and teachers and the belief that they can do it.

- Be consistent in “*checks and balances*” practices and accountability of teachers and students and “*speak with one voice*” when communicating mission/goals so as to build trust
- Create a positive, supportive culture and climate by **dissuading naysaying and push back** (e.g., relay that teachers can spend less time in PD if they do pre-work) and getting buy-in
- **Find what motivates** your students (e.g., graduation) and teachers (e.g., getting students college ready)
- **Reward positive student attendance, conduct, and academic behaviors** with incentives, such as socials, ice cream parties, out of uniform months, and t-shirts
- **Celebrate successes** by showing teacher appreciation through gift cards, providing lunch/snacks, and having monthly recognition events

Theme 6: Taking Risks



ILDs and principals work together using their expertise to allow proven teachers to take risks and try other methods to achieve goals while being willing to deal with the consequences if the risks do not work.

- ILDs and principals worked together to **customize schedules** to have more time to work with students on specific ELA areas and to coach teachers (leader moves)
- Principals and teachers worked together with intentionality in some schools to **teach foundations** during small-group instruction using “*old school*” methods (teacher moves)
- Principals ensured teachers helped students **develop test-taking skills** in answering questions quickly
- Principals also sought out knowledge and strategies through **looking for examples** of effective principal practices online and by reaching out to other principals