



National Institute for Direct Instruction

HISPANIC STUDENTS DRIVE SCHUYLER'S ACADEMIC SUCCESS

SCHUYLER, NEBRASKA (Oct. 2011) Students at Schuyler Elementary, a school in Eastern Nebraska with a large Hispanic population, have made significant gains in academic achievement over the past few years. In 2009-10, less than half (44%) of Schuyler's third graders met the state standards as measured by the Nebraska State Assessment (NeSA). Only three students exceeded the state standards. Last school year (2010-11), 67%, of Schuyler's third graders achieved passing scores, with eight percent of the students exceeding the state standards. This significant gain in achievement satisfied the state's requirement for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Girls made the largest growth in academic success on the NeSA from 35% passing in 2009-10 to 64% passing in 2010-11.

Driving these gains is the progress made by Schuyler's Hispanic students, who comprise more than ninety percent of the school's population. In 2009-10, a mere 39% of Schuyler's Hispanic students passed the NeSA. Not a single one exceeded the standards. Last year, in 2010-11, 57% of Hispanic students met and eight percent exceeded the standards, totaling 65% of the school's Hispanic population meeting or exceeding the rigorous state assessment goals.

What are they doing to achieve such success? In 2008-09, Schuyler Elementary began implementing Direct Instruction (DI) with support from the National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI). Bill Comley, administrator at Schuyler Elementary, attributes the school's success primarily to the professional development and coaching support provided by NIFDI. "The professional development and on-site support NIFDI provides is critical in preparing teachers to teach our students effectively and implement the program with fidelity," Comley says. "Their staff knows the ins and outs of the program and ensures we learn them, too, so that our students can experience the greatest success possible."

Darli Jo Vrba, Schuyler administrator, notes one particularly relevant element of the DI program – the Language component. Vrba explained that providing the students with an introduction and practice in language skills they needed in order to learn was vital to students' success in school. "It helps students to hear and understand what language should actually sound like versus the language they hear on the street," she says. "It gives children the tools to learn, not just the ability to speak. They were already able to speak independently quite well."

Mr. Comley also attributes students' impressive improvement to the weekly data analysis and problem-solving sessions with NIFDI. Each week, student performance data in the Reading Mastery curriculum is reviewed by NIFDI consultants. Using the data, the consultants, along with school staff, make changes in the students' instructional programming. These changes include advancing students in the curriculum and/or providing additional support to students who need assistance in mastering the skills. This unique feature of NIFDI support is vital to a successful implementation of DI.

According to Ms. Vrba, the Coaches' Training and problem-solving sessions provided by NIFDI has built strong literacy coaches and teachers in their school. She says, "NIFDI spends a lot of time ensuring coaches are strong in the programs so they can continue the implementation when NIFDI isn't here. This implementation wouldn't have happened without the support of NIFDI and our teachers' buy-in, which only came after NIFDI showed such care and enthusiasm for Direct Instruction and how it could help our students."



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NIFDI is a non-profit organization that provides comprehensive support for schools implementing DI. To learn more about Direct Instruction or NIFDI, visit their website at www.nifdi.org.

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