



Jennifer E. Haws

Glenwood Elementary School
Virginia Beach, Virginia

jennifer.haws@vbschools.com

Best Practices

1) One of the key best practices in education today is the leveraging of technology as an instructional tool. As an assistant principal, I have worked hard to learn, model, and share technology resources effectively.

I have spent a great deal of time studying current educational technology advancements. I have attended national and local technology conferences and participated in V.B.C.P.S. sponsored trainings. In addition, I worked to earn my Google Certified Educator Certification in 2016 and 2019, and I continue to follow technology education innovators through Twitter, websites, and weekly blogs to stay abreast of the latest advances.

My technology knowledge supports my instructional vision as an assistant principal. I believe it is important to demonstrate my instructional leadership and expectations to my students and staff through my usage of various technological devices. I love visiting the Learning Commons or classrooms and having students ask questions about technology. Admittedly, we often learn together!

Another key way I model technology usage is through social media. I organize school data using spreadsheets and formatting to highlight at-risk students for intervention. I started a school-wide data-tracking initiative and goal setting program for all of my students and teachers using Google Sheets. I regularly use Google Forms for parent input and transportation data, organize testing resources through Google Drive, share instructional resources through Shared Google Team Drives, schedule meetings through a Google Calendar Sheet, and use FlipGrid to provide student feedback. It is important that I “practice” educational technology regularly and openly for my staff and students.

I have been able to share this instructional technology beyond my home and school by working collaboratively with other assistant principals in V.B.C.P.S. to share ideas and teach new applications. I

mentor another assistant principal and have been able to teach him about the Google Applications for Education. I presented “Leveraging Instructional Technology for School Administrators” at the Florida Educational Technology Conference in 2018 and 2019, and “Technology Bridges the Gap for Multi-modal Literacy” at the 2018 VDOE SEL Workshop. These workshops offered the opportunity to share technology ideas to teachers, administrators, and senior staff around the state.

2) The role of assistant principal is busy and demanding. Paperwork and responsibilities are never-ending and can take over if I let them. While building management and meetings are important, I must always remember I work in a school. Learning must come first. When I think of best practices for an assistant principal, I feel prioritizing instructional leadership yields the greatest results.

The instructional leader role is my favorite part of my job. It offers me time to build on my skills and experiences as a first-grade teacher and reaching specialist. As an instructional leader, I guide my students, collaborate with teachers, share ideas with parents, and focus on building the capacity of others.

Working directly with students is the best! I read stories, model lessons, and visit classrooms to catch students in the learning process. Each student interaction offers the opportunity to demonstrate to students how important it is to learn. These interactions also reveal to students my role as an instructional leader. Some exchanges are simple, like helping a child decode a tricky vocabulary word. Other times, I visit classes to model 45-minute lessons. I created a “GPS” comprehension strategy to help students organize their thinking about a text on a piece of scratch paper. This method requires students to consider the G: Genres, P: Purpose of the author, and S: Summary of main text events using sketch-noting. I have modeled the “GPS” strategy and provided anchor posters to over 30 classrooms in the past two years. Students throughout the school use this comprehension strategy when taking Reading Comprehension tests or SOLs.

Attending weekly collaboration is another key part of my instructional leadership. During grade-level collaborations, I have the opportunity to work directly with the teacher to examine data, unpack the curriculum, identify planning goals, establish grading timelines, and compare student performance. I love learning alongside of my teachers and sharing resources/ideas from my background.

Furthermore, I have been able to lead building level professional development about the QFT (Question Formulation Technique), PBIS, word study, and small group instruction. Presenting to such a large staff can be daunting; however, each presentation sends a clear message to teachers that I am: willing to be vulnerable; I have instructional knowledge to share; and I am a relevant life-long learner.

In addition, I have shared presentations for VDOE at the state “Deeper Learning Conferences” and “SOL Workshops.” These regional presentations help me solidify my instructional understanding and collaborate from peers in different districts.

In short, instructional leadership is a key best practice for all assistant principals. Realizing time is precious, I choose to allocate many of my minutes to instructional roles. Through modeling,

collaborating, and presentations, I have the power to build the competence of my students, teachers and parents.