



BEDFORD COUNTY
SCHOOL DISTRICT



BEDFORD,
VIRGINIA



10,000
STUDENTS

How One District Leveraged the Teacher Advisory Model to Maximize Outcomes in CCR & Beyond

Beth Robertson, Associate Director of Learner Support Services

At A Glance

Located in the Piedmont Region of Virginia near the Blue Ridge Mountains about halfway between Lynchburg and Roanoke sits Bedford County School District. Bedford is home to almost 10,000 students, who normally attend 22 schools - 13 elementary, 3 middle, 1 alternative, 1 tech center, and 3 high schools. This year however, the feeder school landscape - and the grade level divisions within those schools - have a new look. During one of the most challenging academic years in national history, the Bedford team leaned into their commitment to being learner-centered and designed an innovative framework for delivering face to face instruction all year with the Teacher Advisory Model as the linchpin.

Teacher Advisor = Learning Coach

Beginning last spring and working into summer, teams of Bedford educators divided the work of devising safe mitigations and logistics to support a fall *Return to Learn* across the district, beginning on Day 1 of the current school year. This included a full shift in grade level divisions amongst the schools with Elementary School buildings housing grades K-3 and Middle School buildings accommodating grades 4-6, thus allowing all students in grades K-6 to return to in-person instruction full time, five days a week, while still adhering to social distancing guidelines and other health requirements. High schools became home to 7th-12th graders organized into Cohort Groups with an assigned teacher advisor they refer to as their Learning Coach, a role title chosen intentionally to emphasize the dynamic of this novel relationship. Using a rotating schedule of in-person learning days, each Learning Coach was assigned two cohorts of ten students each.

Putting It Into Action

In this model, Learning Coaches serve as primary points of contact for both the students and their families and work closely with the students' counselors and course teachers; they are the primary monitor of each student's progress as a whole. On the 2-3 days that the 7th-12th graders are on campus each week, they report only to one place- their Learning Coach's classroom. Designed to meet health and safety regulations, this structure has also offered a place of consistency and opportunities for small group bonding among the students in the cohort and their shared Learning Coach. While cohort students still receive virtual instruction from their teachers, the Learning Coach is present to support, encourage, and mitigate problems. Additionally, the Learning Coach helps students to arrange additional support options for direct contact with teacher either through office hours, seminars (small group) and labs (larger hands-on groupings). In this way, Bedford's model is the ultimate blend of both hybrid learning and the flipped classroom- providing not only direct instruction but also independent practice and additional, individualized support both from content teachers and the Learning Coach.

Infusing SEL + College & Career Readiness

The model has also allowed for direct delivery of a comprehensive, Social Emotional Learning-infused, College and Career Readiness curriculum, all of which are ASCA-aligned and designed thematically in accordance with the season of the school year. Learning Coaches have delivered the course material which was housed in the district's LMS, Canvas, and all CCR lessons have been facilitated in conjunction with the students' MajorClarity personal portfolios. What Beth Robertson, Associate Director of Learner Support Services, likes best about this design is that it "moves academic and career planning out of just school counseling and into the full campus." As she points out, course planning & selection should be a process that synchronizes the student's career interests and the content teacher's knowledge of the progressive course options and how these options align with the student's goals.

Embracing the Shift

As Beth Robertson knows, transformational change - such as what Bedford County School District has undertaken this year in adopting this secondary Learning Coach Model - is never easy. This is why the preparatory professional development staff members participated in this past summer

was key and centered around reconnecting educators with their "Why?". Remembering that the model they needed to let go of was not perfect, they embraced this change as an opportunity to infuse what they felt had been missing.

Exceeding Expectations

Despite some initial resistance last summer, their most recent data reflects a story of widespread buy-in. From their internal surveys about the cohort model, both students and teachers overwhelmingly responded that they want to continue with this model no matter what future health challenges may or may not exist. Students feel they actually have greater support for academics and personal growth and deeper connections with adults. In fact, on the recent Virginia DCJS annual survey, every indicator on relationships with adults showed improvements with some by as much as 10-20% point gain. Internal data gathered also reflects an increase in positive outlook on school climate and learning as well as a significant decrease in instances of bullying.

Beth notes that the nature of the randomly selected student cohort groups have fostered relationships between students who may not otherwise be affiliated, which she cites as another contributing factor to the decrease in bullying. The nature of the family atmosphere in the Learning Coach Cohort Model has provided a sense of belonging as well as personal and small group accountability, another likely contributor to their significant drop in discipline across the board. Equally exciting is the fact that even in the midst of all these changes, Bedford was one of the first MajorClarity partner districts to earn the distinction of "Power User" this school year - and the first district to reach that benchmark out of all of our Virginia partners - achieving high student activation and return rates as students engaged in discovering their future possibilities, and received support to plan intentionally for their dreams.

BEDFORD COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

92.1%

GRADUATION RATE

94%

STUDENT ACTIVATION RATE

70%

STUDENT USER RETURN RATE

"WE ARE GIVING THESE KIDS AGENCY AND TEACHING THEM TO BE DECISION-MAKERS ABOUT THEIR OWN DESTINY."

-BETH ROBERTSON