

## North Harlem Elementary

### Year of Inquiry

North Harlem Elementary is located in a small rural community of Columbia County. It is classified as a Title I School, due to the high poverty level of the families being served. Being a Title I school enables the school to have a lower teacher/student ratio, thus allowing the teacher to have more time to meet individual student needs.

North Harlem Elementary has been in the Partner School Network, PSN, since 1999. The school is currently in the inquiry phase of the four-year cycle. During this year the PSN is to systematically examine an issue of significance to its ongoing school improvement as well as the professional growth of the faculty involved.

Our school administered a survey provided by The National Study of School Evaluation NSSE, to parents, teachers, and students in 2004. The intent of the survey was to delve into the instructional practices of the school in order to engage in meaningful quality improvement. In addition, the survey examined areas of school climate and environment that may have a negative impact on student achievement.

The results of the survey were interesting. It was revealed that both parents and teachers were aware of some problems with bullying, but did not consider bullying a major concern. The student survey ranked bullying as their number one concern. After careful examination and discussion it was decided that the school needed to aggressively address the growing concern of bullying in our school.

The administration and leadership team began to research programs that had been successfully implemented in schools similar to ours. The team met and shared the various programs that were identified. After careful consideration, the Discipline A Total

Approach, DATA, program by Dr. Terry Alderman was selected. The program is designed to assist teachers and administrators with the often, difficult task of managing student behavior. The program includes a comprehensive behavior management model that may be applied to classroom and/or school-wide discipline. The leadership team attended training during the summer, the entire faculty returned to school two days early in order to participate in the initial training sessions, and paraprofessionals received training during the school day by the members of the Leadership Team.

The next step in the process, involved having each individual teacher develop a behavior management system for their classroom incorporating strategies from the training. Every adult in the school implements the use of private discipline and attempts to use a variety of non-verbal cues to correct inappropriate behavior. Each teacher thoroughly discussed teacher expectations concerning behavior as well as the consequences for not following the established rules. Major emphasis was placed on positive reinforcement of appropriate behavior.

The Leadership team met and discussed successes, problems, and possible changes that needed to be made. Next, the team determined the need for a school-wide plan, which would target appropriate hallway behavior when students traveled to various places in the school without supervision. It was determined that the primary focus would be on walking in the hallways, showing respect to others, and the use of good manners.

The implementation of the program began in 2004/05. In 2005/06 we continued with many of the strategies and goals set the previous year as well as additional components that may help make the program more successful in meeting the needs of our students and teachers. Members of the Leadership Team also met with the Parent

Council to explain the program and answer questions they may have.

Student behavior as well as student achievement has improved as a result of the program. The implementation of consistent rules and consequences has helped our students have a safe environment that allows them the opportunity to learn. The Leadership Team meets on a regular basis to assess the program and the goals that have been set.

In April of 2006, Dr. Terry Alderman, the author of the D.A.T.A. program, spent two days at our school. The first day was spent visiting classrooms, interviewing teachers and students, and observing student behavior in all areas of the school. The second day was spent meeting with each grade level to address their concerns and offer suggestions for improvement. At the end of the second day, a meeting was held in which Dr. Alderman revealed his findings. He also said that the faculty and students displayed a commitment to procedures and the overall tone and climate of the school was extremely positive. He is in the process of developing additional video series and will be returning in the fall to use our school as a model elementary school for the D.A.T.A. Program.

The intent of the project has been to provide a positive learning environment that promotes learning. The implementation of consistent rules, guidelines, and high expectations for students has contributed to a more comfortable climate for learning. The students are monitored closely throughout the day, which has resulted in higher student success in addition to a more positive school climate.

The program will continue to be a vital part of our school. We will continue to adjust strategies and make improvements in order to help our students become successful adults.