



RTI AT WORK™

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

Clinton High School CLINTON, IOWA

Course failures in English
and algebra decreased
79% in just five years.



DEMOGRAPHICS

- 1,100 Students
- 55% Free and reduced lunch
- 1% Limited English proficient
- 18% Special education
- 12.3% African American
- 5.4% Hispanic
- 1.4% Asian/Pacific Islander
- <1% Other

Clinton High School is located on the Mississippi River in the county seat of Clinton, Iowa.

CHALLENGE

When Clinton High School administrators attended a Solution Tree conference in the summer of 2011, they hoped to learn strategies that would help them fight several discouraging trends. The graduation rate was declining as failures were increasing. State assessment results and attendance were both down. Student behavior issues were increasing. Staff efficacy and overall school morale were low and continuing to diminish. The existing structure and culture did not allow staff the time to fully support all students—those in general classes as well as those in honors and AP. Another challenge was eliminating

the barrier to honors and AP classes, making those opportunities available to all students.

“After hearing Mike Mattos speak, I was very intrigued by his vision but still had many reasons why none of it would really be successful for me in my school,” recalls former Principal Karinne Tharaldson-Jones. “I approached him after his session and stated just that. He confirmed my belief by saying this: ‘You are the principal, right?’ He then stated, ‘You are right; it won’t work for you. You are the principal, and *you* don’t believe it.’”

IMPLEMENTATION

“That conversation with Mike Mattos changed everything,” Tharaldson-Jones says. “He was right; I had the power, the resources, and the vision to fix things. If not me, who?” Tharaldson-Jones returned to CHS with her leadership team, determined to focus on the right things that would enable a total and complete school system change:

- Student learning
- Teacher collaboration
- Administrative “laser-like” focus

Using the books *Pyramid Response to Intervention* and *Simplifying Response to Intervention* (Buffum, Mattos, and Weber) as guides, CHS staff eventually realigned and implemented an intervention process where data for every student was analyzed by a data team each week. Student indicators now are reviewed each week, and interventions are implemented for all students in all class levels, including AP. Staff are required to update grades

each week, and the data team reviews the success of each intervention.

Tharaldson-Jones and her team started very small and with great focus: one teacher, one course, and one grade level. “We put a study table in place for Algebra 1 during lunch. One teacher was assigned to this lunch intervention to see if any progress could be made. We had great success after only one trimester. Our failures dropped in half.”

After expanding this small effort to other courses, school staff ultimately created a system where students could be successful and achieve at high levels.

“In the end I realized the biggest barrier to the success at CHS was me,” Tharaldson-Jones says. “Our staff was good enough, our students were bright enough; the principal just had to be brave enough.”

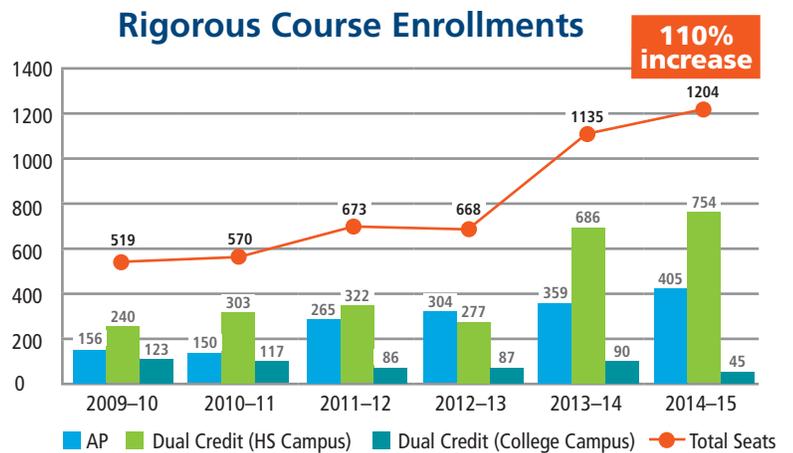


“CHS’s outstanding results are because our team comes together each week and has meaningful conversations around interventions. No excuses or complaining allowed. Student success is the only goal. Mike Mattos was right.”

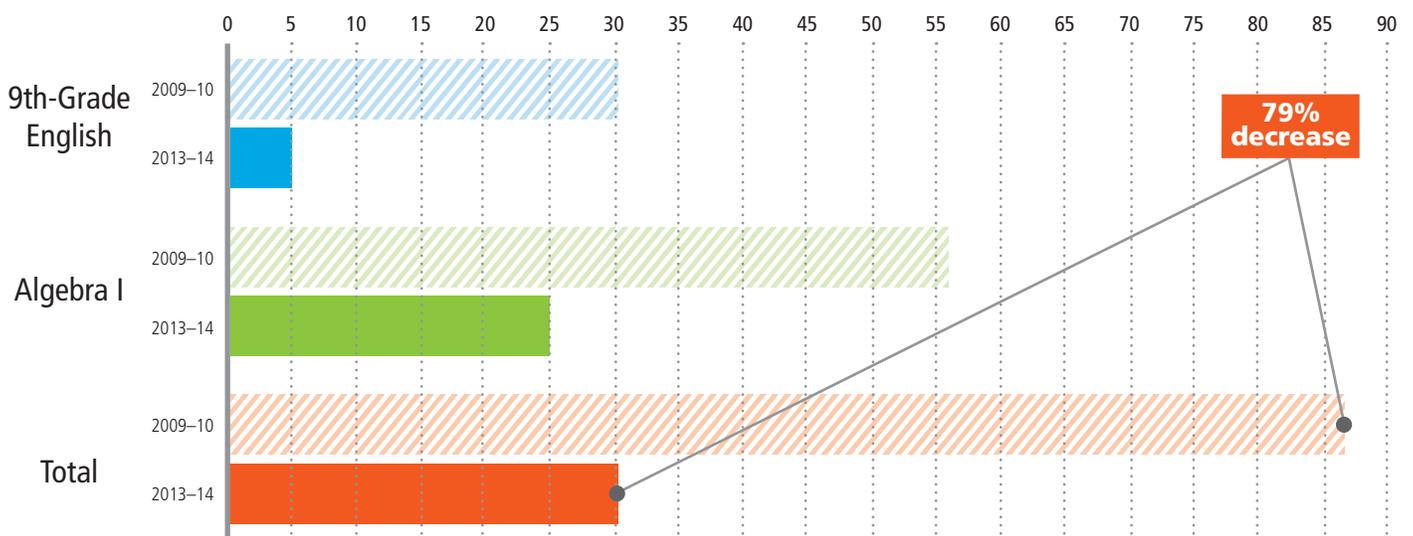
—Former Principal Karinne Tharaldson-Jones

RESULTS

The trends at CHS now tell a very different story. By every indicator, CHS has been successful in improving student performance. From 2009 to 2014, the total number of course failures in grades 9–12 decreased by 79%. Results also show that students feel supported in their efforts to be successful in the classroom and, in response, are showing up to learn. In just one year—from the 2012–13 school year to the 2013–14 school year—student attendance increased by 3%!



Clinton High School Study Table Results—Ds



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