

Chantilly High School

Fairfax County Public Schools, Chantilly, Virginia

Location type: Large suburb

District enrollment: 183,417 students

School enrollment: 2,660 students

Percentage of students at school eligible for free and reduced price meals: 15

Key Takeaways

Chantilly High School has always performed well on standardized assessments. In 2012, they voluntarily participated in the OECD Test for Schools pilot to determine how they compare to schools globally. The 158 pages of results pointed to some unexpected realities about students' abilities to analyze and apply information, their reading skills and behaviors, and teacher-student relations. The school used the results as a framework from which to develop school improvement plan goals and a school-wide focus on critical reading, critical thinking, and strengthening relationships in the school.

Actions Taken

To achieve its newly set goals, Chantilly took a number of actions, including the following:

-  The school purchased a research-based reading program, created a fiction bookroom, added classroom libraries, and selected a school-wide common book for summer reading.
-  The school also hired a resource teacher to (1) support teachers in the classroom, (2) facilitate collaboration among teachers, (3) model instructional strategies, and (4) demonstrate how to develop higher-order questions.
-  Critical reading and critical thinking were implemented across content areas.
 - The English department standardized its assessments by using rubrics that promote deep reading.
 - Math and science tests no longer focus on multiple choice questions, but rather include more short-answer questions that require critical thinking.
-  Additionally, the principal began including tips about critical thinking in the weekly newsletter. The tips have been successful in prompting teachers to think about the ways in which they can integrate critical thinking into classroom instruction. Teachers have also shared strategies and successful practices with one another.
-  Since 2013, Chantilly leaders and faculty members have participated in a variety of Global Learning Network events, including the 2013 and 2014 national convenings, a number of virtual convenings, and the D.C.-Virginia-Maryland regional meeting.
-  Lastly, Chantilly looked for ways to support teachers in strengthening relationships and engagement with students. At the start of the year, teachers were given a list of tips on how to build relationships with students, and the school scheduled more events and activities among the faculty to enhance morale and provide opportunities for teachers to socialize outside the school setting.

When Chantilly took the assessment again in 2014, the proportion of students performing at levels 5 and 6 in reading was 18 percent, an increase from 11 percent in the pilot, and the number of students performing below Level 2 in reading decreased by 7 percent. Additionally, the number of students performing below Level 2 in math dropped by 21 percent. As a result of its improvement efforts, Chantilly has seen more deliberate professional development planning with respect to its areas of focus, more intentional instructional planning on teachers' part to support the three school foci, and school staff reporting improved working conditions.

Those wishing to learn more about the practices at Chantilly High School may visit the school's website [here](#).