

Mine Hill School District

When Principal Adam Zygmunt and then Superintendent Lee Nittel came on board in Mine Hill Township, they helped to provide steady, consistent leadership to a district that had experienced years of instability through various leaders. These leaders recognized the first steps to improvement were to build strong, trusting relationships with teachers and staff and to learn more about the needs of the community.

Zygmunt says, "I strongly believe in diving into the work and having everyone involved in the process." The administration worked with teachers to rewrite and realign all nine curricular areas, which helped foster unity among educators and continuity for student learning. Mine Hill educators then implemented Reading and Writing Workshop, contracted instru

District Profile

- Schools: 1
- Grades Served: PK-6
- Total Enrollment: 350
- Economically Disadvantaged: 26%

implemented Reading and Writing Workshop, contracted instructional coaches, added curriculum coordinator positions, and have begun to identify and empower teacher leaders.

The administration team has built a trusting, communal culture that is focused on growth. Teachers have ample opportunities to collaborate and feel comfortable taking risks in the classroom. Four periods of common planning time each week and use of schoolwide Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) trackers provide teachers the time and data to track student data across multiple years. Moreover, teachers are so comfortable with the district's open door policy that they will regularly invite the administration to observe their classrooms when they are trying new things.

Mine Hill attributes their gains to their student-centered, growth-focused mindset. Using teacher evaluation and the Danielson Framework to study the expectations and have honest conversations about observational data and how to grow. Teacher Robby Suarez thinks critically about his own practice in this same way. Suarez explains, "when class goes well, I always wonder what could have gone better." Nittel extends this ideology to the larger Mine Hill community saying "we believe in growth at every level of the community...the learning community we work with is everyone in Mine Hill." They carry out this mindset by creating opportunities for parents and community members to learn with their students through literacy and math nights, as well as World Language nights to celebrate their students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Zygmunt adds, "in that way, everyone feels responsible for the growth of all of our kids."

Suarez says their practices have paid off and students are more confident and passionate about school. "Students can do a lot more than we give them credit for and we should allow them to do more," Zygmunt says. Parent of two children from the district, Joan Cirella, says, "as a mom and an educator myself, I wouldn't want my children in any other school... both my children are empowered and have a strengthened ability to think for themselves."

Ask Mine Hill to tell its story:

- Schoolwide Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)
- Innovation time
- Student-centered classrooms
- Rewriting the curricula alongside teachers
- Using evaluation for growth
- Individualized student conferences and focused supports

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