The implementation of Learning Focused Strategies at Sun Valley Elementary School has been both a unique and rewarding experience for our staff. The issues of time constraints and management have been a challenge for our staff to ensure the successful implementation of Learning Focused Strategies. Following our training session in August, the staff came to a consensus as to which curriculum area to first implement Learning Focused Strategies. The area chosen was one comfortable for all the staff felt most comfortable with. This consensus led to our personnel having a personal buy-in for this new initiative. Our faculty then began the implementation of Learning Focused Strategies on a comfort level needed to complete the task given them.

With our follow-up training completed and several days of hands on experience under our belts, the staff realized that we were already using several strategies of Learning Focused Strategies. This recognition on the part of the staff increased their comfort level as well as their confidence level. Classroom walk-throughs show evidence of the usage of a variety of Learning Focused Strategies (graphic organizers, word walls, collaborative pairs, summarizations, etc.). At the beginning of October, our curriculum teams revisited WESTEST Data and decided to change our Learning Focus to the area that showed a weakness. We have confidence that this renewed focus will enhance student learning and increase student achievement.

The staff of Sun Valley School has experienced that utilizing the key element of Learning Focused Schools, adapting not adopting, allows us to better fit the needs of our students to ensure student achievement.

--- Jon Corbett, Principal, Sun Valley School

Implementing Learning Focus Strategies at Bluefield Intermediate

Here at Bluefield Intermediate School the fourth grade teachers use several strategies out of the Learning-Focused Strategies Notebook. One of the strategies used weekly in Mr. Doug Meade’s reading class is the Frayer Model. This model “helps students learn the meanings of key concepts through word categorization.” Students put their vocabulary word in the middle and then use four items associated with the word. They will give the definition, characteristics, examples and non-examples. This particular method has been very successful in teaching vocabulary.

Mrs. Kay Sudduth and Ms. Edie Ann Cooper have implemented a graph similar to the Frayer Model. Students put a vocabulary word in the center, they then write the definition, an antonym, a synonym, and give an example of the word. They finish the graph by putting the word in their own sentence.

We also use graphic organizers on a daily basis in one or many subjects. We use flowcharts, cycle graphs, compare/contrast charts, descriptive organizers, story maps, story pyramids, character maps, webs, Venn diagrams, and KWL charts to name a few. These various charts are kept in notebooks, practice books, or done as a group and displayed in the room.

The strategy “Ticket Out the Door” has proven beneficial also. Ms. Pam Miller uses this each morning. Her students must correct two sentences from the book Daily Language Review. Students must turn in their “tickets out the door” before changing classes for reading. Ms. Edie Ann Cooper uses this same method in her social studies class. After reading and discussing a lesson, students must answer one of the review questions on a post-it note. These “notes” are collected and the next day used to review the lesson.

The fourth grade has found several of the Learning Focused Strategies useful. We have found these strategies very beneficial to our students. We have also discovered that we have been doing these strategies for years. We are just more aware of the benefits!

--- Edie Ann Cooper, Pam Miller, Patty Ball, Kay Sudduth, Doug Meade, Bluefield Intermediate School

Glenwood Pride

Glenwood School is proud of the Learning Focus Strategies that are taking place everyday with the students. With such positive changes in instruction taking place, we have invited parents to visit the school at scheduled times to see these strategies demonstrated. Parents have been pleased and amazed to see these new strategies being utilized. The most popular is the graphic organizers being used with the essential questions. Of course, who could forget the password ...?

We have scheduled these activities during American Education Week and will continue until Winter Break. These new strategies have been great public relation tools for us ... Better than an open house ...

--- Jane Walthall, Principal, Glenwood School

--- Jane Walthall, Principal, Glenwood School