



CM English Teacher Jacob Carlson Has Strong Impact With Overall School Literacy Improvements

by Chris Rhodes, Reporter
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BETHALTO - Civic Memorial English teacher Jacob Carlson is known for his innovative teaching talents. Last year, Carlson was chosen as a Rural Teacher Leader Collaborative pick. The program concluded at the end of the school year and left a strong impact on students.

Much of Carlson's work was sparked when students scored below the state average in literacy over the previous two years.

"I knew our school needed a coordinated approach to literary instruction," he said. "This is a challenge in any high school where teachers are separated into departments, so we

decided that creating a space for teacher collaboration was essential to our instructional goal. We began leading 'learning walks,' where teachers observed other classrooms and reflected on what they saw, to help teachers become comfortable sharing and learning directly from each other."

"After students scored below the state average in literacy over the past two years, I knew our school needed a coordinated approach to literacy instruction. I wanted to connect teachers' content knowledge to district writing goals, establish building-wide best practices around reading and writing, and see teachers hold each other accountable for those practices."

Carlson continued: "We also knew we needed to connect teachers to students, and one of our biggest successes was our reading poster campaign. Teachers put up posters with the books they were reading, and these sparked conversations between staff and students right away. As students entered classrooms, they would comment on a teacher's poster or linger to ask questions about a book, leading to many opportunities to learn about what students liked, too. Some students even started helping teachers build their own classroom libraries."

"It is refreshing to see educators step up...Jacob was able to bring other members of the faculty under his umbrella to implement new ideas." -Justin Newell, Principal.

% of students who:

