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EAD 824

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Assignment 2- Proposal year-long plan for professional learning

Attn: Central Office, Board Members, Principals

### Introduction

Good afternoon. I have spent four fruitful years employed in this district and have continued to grow and develop into a highly successful teacher. Every day as my students sit down to begin first hour, I look at them and imagine the infinite possibilities that lie ahead of them. Educators in our district want nothing more than for our students to go out into the world and become successful citizens with thriving careers and families. Our world however, is becoming increasingly competitive and our district needs to continue to rise to the competition and provide our students with top tier education that suits the high demands that will be placed on them after graduation. How can our district provide this type of instruction? By moving from a state of professional development to professional learning that focuses on providing teachers with quality collaborative time. I propose to develop learning teams, a Critical Friends Group and District Leadership Team, in each building to help re-frame and re-think the current PLC program and help re-structure building culture. These learning teams will elect a facilitator and will meet twice a month. The facilitators will then meet monthly to discuss successes and roadblocks. Additionally, facilitators of each group will meet monthly with administrators to share data and generate ideas for staff-wide development and initiatives.

### Background and Rationale

The data from the results of the staff self-assessments showed many positive happenings in each building. The data displayed a strong sense of owning the curriculum and following state standards, as well as a strong sense of understanding and using successful teaching strategies

such as Classroom Instruction that Works and Kagan. The results also displayed a dramatic concern for re-shaping and building a positive and trusting building-wide culture as well as a dire need to overhaul the current PLC program.

In order to provide our students with the best instruction, our community must trust in each other AND collaborate meaningfully. Roy explains that “trust...is elusive, engaging, and essential to meaningful school improvement,” and that “to encourage and build teacher collaboration and use job-embedded professional development strategies, principals need to build a school culture that is characterized by trust.” (Roy, 2003, pg. 1). Our teachers and administrators need to work together to rebuild that trust. They need to revive their professional capital. Fullan and Hargreaves explain that “when the vast majority of teachers possess the power of professional capital, they become smart and talented, committed and collegial, thoughtful and wise.” (Full and Hargreaves, 2012, pg. 2)

### Proposal for Leading Teacher Learning

The overall goal for this plan is to create a culture of professional learning through purposeful collaboration guided by data collection and research-based best practices. First, our goal is to rebuild the trust in our building through guided creating of teams. Roy explains that “trust, in a school setting, involves making educational decisions that put the interests of students above personal and political interests... and [where they] believe in teacher ability and willingness to fulfill their responsibilities effectively.” (Roy, 2003, pg. 1) When teachers form trusting relationships, they are much more receptive to improving their craft through collaboration.

Second, we need to re-structure our current PLC system and move beyond simply saying we are “collaborating” and use collaboration to create powerful change in our instruction. Colton and Langer explain that “Collaboration, however, does not happen automatically. For teachers to move beyond a ‘culture of polite conversation’ toward deep analysis of teaching and learning, groups need to develop, practice, and reinforce norms of collaboration intentionally. This evolution toward collaboration is possible through facilitation and other organizational resources.” (Colton and Langer, 2015, pg. 117).

I propose to reach these intended outcomes by adopting Critical Friends Groups and creation of a district leadership team.

### *Critical Friends Groups*

Critical Friends Groups, or CFG’s, are most easily defined as “a unique form of professional learning community that focuses on problems of practice and leads to student learning.” (Quate, 2015, pg. 127). By creating these groups within our buildings, we can work to create a positive community that values meaningful collaboration. Critical Friends Groups are intended for members to “be accountable to their colleagues to continually improve their practice...engage in public, collaborative assessment...challenge each other’s assumptions about educational excellence...and examine their beliefs and question how these beliefs are enacted in their practice.” (Quate, 2015, pg. 127). Creating these groups will help create trust that is currently lacking in our building. It will provide a safe, judgement free space where educators will be able to share their successes and failures. It will create opportunity to give and receive feedback in a non-threatening arena.

The steps to implement CFG’s in each building include

- Selection and training of a facilitator
- Preparing for the meeting
- Teambuilding
- Setting norms
- Use of protocols with text for familiarity and understanding
- Use of protocols to discuss current student/situation
- Planning for next week

These groups are intended to enable educators to collaborate in a meaningful way. To generate teacher “buy-in” and autonomy, an email will be sent to all staff to generate interest in a facilitator position. Because our current PLC’s are chosen groups based upon our subject area, CFG’s would breathe new life into collaboration. Once facilitators are determined, facilitators and administrators will work to determine small groups, intermingling grade level and content area to form dynamic groups that will ignite conversations. I am convinced that if promoted properly, CFG’s can be powerful way to challenge assumptions and expand perspective if groups are trusting and committed. Fahey and Ippolito explain that “a socializing learning practice focuses on learning about the perspectives of others and taking them into account as part of systematic experimentation with different teaching practices.” (Fahey & Ippolito, 2014, pg. 34).

### *District Leadership Team*

In order to re-build trust and re-shape PLC’s, the leaders in our building must work collaboratively with educators and embrace the notion that they are the “lead learner.” (Hirsch & Crow, 2017, pg. 123). The creation of a district leadership team would promote learning and “lead by example.” (Hirsh & Crow, 2017, pg. 123). This would help to re-build trust that our

leaders are there to support and facilitate a warm environment, while also challenging us to learn and grow with them. As in *Powerful Designs Chapter 1* (2012), Easton explains that “the principal maintains ‘I’m the No. 1 learner around here.’ But, she adds, everyone can be No. 1.” (Easton, 2001). When the district leadership team is leading by example, other teachers can feel comfortable to learn and make mistakes.

The steps to create a district leadership team are:

- Elect or select members
- Use of constructed conversations
- Team learning cycle to solve specific problems
- Select learning material
- Engage in team learning with teachers
- Develop expertise in certain area (curriculum, behavior management strategies, technology)
- Fan out and share knowledge

In Chapter 10, *Becoming a Learning Team* (2017) Hirsch and Crow explain that “Principals benefit from learning with others who serve in their roles as school leaders, whether in districtwide teams or in networks that include leaders from outside their systems.” (pg. 124). When administrators engage in professional learning among themselves and with educators, the dialogue for meaningful collaboration opens. They lead by example with hopes to ignite teacher’s passion for learning. The district leadership team would engage in their own learning and work through the process together which could then be shared out to the staff. Not only would the team report on the learning they engaged in, but the **PROCESS** and how they worked together as a team.

Timeline

	CFG	CFG Assessment	District Leadership Team	District Leadership Team Assessment
Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection and training of facilitator</li> <li>• Selection of group members</li> <li>• Preparation for meeting</li> <li>• Determine team building activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator selected</li> <li>• Wide variety of members selected for each group</li> <li>• Agenda set for first meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elect or select members</li> <li>• Select learning materials or PL outside of school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have chosen at least one specific learning activity or PL session outside of school</li> </ul>
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First meeting</li> <li>• Team building</li> <li>• Setting norms</li> <li>• Use of protocol with text for</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Norms agreed upon by CFG</li> <li>• Full run through with protocol using a text</li> <li>• Discussion of positives/challenges to using a structured protocol</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team learning cycle to help solve specific problems</li> <li>• Engage in team learning with teachers (share information/strategies)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose one-two specific problems to address</li> <li>• Discussion with teachers regarding team</li> </ul>

	familiarity			learning (follow up every two weeks)
Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of protocol with real situation</li> <li>• Planning for next meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of positives/challenges to using real situation (risk, threat, vulnerability?)</li> <li>• Agenda for next meeting</li> <li>• Feedback from group and administrators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop expertise in learning area</li> <li>• Follow up with teachers to address challenges with learning/ working in teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from other members of team</li> <li>• Feedback from teachers</li> </ul>

### Evidence of Accomplishment

1. Use of new learning strategies in classroom through quick informal walkthroughs. The learning done by the district leadership team that is brought to teachers can be quickly gauged through checklists and quick walkthroughs. The observer can determine whether the new learning is being utilized in the classroom (with the means of using this for feedback, not for evaluative purposes) thus continuing the “collaboration for strengthening and improving teaching” notion.
2. Teacher/Administrator survey. Re-assess teachers and administrators using same surveys from the beginning of the year. Compare data on building environment/culture and use of PLC’s for collaboration.
3. Group member surveys. Create open ended survey about the effectiveness and intention of each group (CFG or District Leadership team). By asking open ended-questions such as “What are two positive aspects of your group?” and “What can you group work to



improve on?” members of the group and administrators can informally gauge the effectiveness of each group and how to improve for next year.

### Anticipated Impact

#### Teacher

The creation of a more positive, open, and sharing environment will first and foremost affect teacher morale. When teachers feel supported in their profession, they are more willing to take risks and try out new learning strategies without fear of failure. They look forward to making mistakes and learning from them and having a safe space to share and collaborate. Creation of CFG's will provide teachers with a meaningful, trusted space to confide and collaborate, and to give and receive new ideas. “When teachers learn together, they pool knowledge, and expand their ability to reach all students.” (Quate, 2015, pg. 134).

#### Students

Students will benefit from teacher collaboration. Actual student data and problems are being brought into these collaborative spaces where teachers can learn best how to address the diverse needs of their student populations. When all educators and administrators are on the same page, students benefit from consistency among these groups. “As small groups of teachers analyze student work and engage in other inquiry related to content, instruction, and assessment, they discover how students' learning evolves and how they, as teachers, can most effectively promote this learning.” (Colton and Langer, 2015, pg. 123).

### The School Culture

The school culture will gradually change as these new groups evolve. The district leadership team will show our leaders in a new light, leading the way to our own learning. Because our leaders are also going through the learning process in a group as well, we can learn with them, instead of intimidated. The CFG's will also promote an incredibly positive culture among the groups. Because groups will be heterogenous in the mixing of grade level and content area, fresh ideas will be ignited, and new relationships will be formed. Educators who typically do not interact will be able to collaborate and bond with each other in new ways.

### Summary

Our district is in serious need of a change for a more positive and collaborative community that values meaningful conversations to improve student outcomes. The creation of CFG's and a district leadership team will help promote trust and relationship building while providing a positive, safe, open collaborative space where educators can share ideas to improve student, educator, and administrator learning. I predict that teacher and student morale will improve as new relationships and leadership positions are formed. There will be a less threatening environment and a more positive and sharing one created.

### Next Steps

The first step I would suggest would be to open the facilitator role. Once a facilitator is comfortable, they can then train others to facilitate the meetings as well. This would create an incredibly positive shared responsibility and leadership. Eventually, it would be ideal to jigsaw the CFG groups to see how each group runs and the strengths and challenges of each group. Staff

meetings would be an excellent space to have this sort of discussion and hold each other accountable in the collaborative journey.

### References

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