



professional LEARNING

Issue #7
March, 2008

Upcoming Professional Learning from MSDC in 2008-09

DATA DRIVEN DIALOGUE: PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

Nov. 6 & 7, 2008 and Jan. 22 & 23, 2009

MELG Building, Lansing, MI

This interactive seminar explores and applies a three-phase Collaborative Learning Cycle that guides professional inquiry. Participants investigate strategies and structures that reduce defensiveness and create shared responsibility for student learning. The sessions offer practical tools for discovering assumptions, promoting data-focused inquiry and developing shared understandings of both problems and possible solutions. These understandings become the foundation for dynamic planning processes.

Topics include:

- Using data to focus a group's attention and energy
Apply a variety of interactive structures to help individuals and groups construct meaning as they interact with data and each other. Develop strategies for interpreting, analyzing and applying data to the work of school improvement. Learn how to design engaging data explorations with both quantitative and qualitative data and structure interactive conversations with classroom teachers and those who support them.
- Applying The Collaborative Learning Cycle Experience and apply a three-phase model for guiding data-driven dialogue and collaborative inquiry. Learn how to frame data-based inquiries that help groups: (a) activate prior knowledge by surfacing predictions and underlying assumptions before examining data sets; (b) explore and discover patterns, trends and surprises in data

displays; and (c) organize and integrate learning by developing theories of causation and theories of action as platforms for thoughtful school improvement planning.

- Extending a repertoire of facilitative tools
Refine and enhance your personal toolkit for facilitating productive group learning, planning and problem solving. Learn verbal and nonverbal tools for inviting and sustaining the thinking of group members. Increase your confidence when facilitating difficult conversations as you use data to promote professional interactions about tough-to-talk-about topics.

Laura Lipton and Bruce Wellman are a dynamic presentation team who have captivated thousands of teachers and administrators with designs for creating learning-focused classrooms and schools. Their workshops and seminars provide effective strategies, practical resources and innovative ideas for thoughtful educators grappling with critical professional issues. Their publications effectively translate theory into practical applications.



Laura Lipton



Bruce Wellman

COACHING BOOT CAMP

Feb 25-27, 2009 (Location TBA)

This seminar is for practicing coaches who want to deeply embed coaching behaviors into their personal and professional lives. This training will illuminate the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to support one's role as a coach in schools. These skills will support and accelerate school leaders as they sharpen their focus and channel their energy toward the achievement of their goals for their campus and for their students.

Participants will:

- Deepen their knowledge of the most essential skills of the coach
- Practice for internalization of learned skills
- Coach and be coached
- Generate multiple options for education's toughest challenges facing school leaders

Learning will focus on the most essential tools and skills of coaching; language that promotes positive thinking and problem solving, feedback that accelerates growth, and conversation frameworks that increase effectiveness and efficiency. The principles of coaching and the research on trust will support the work of all types of professional learning communities.

This seminar will strengthen and deepen the knowledge, skills and beliefs of any position responsible for supporting others, building relationships, and ultimately increasing performance. The professional development hours from this seminar may be used for pursuing the certification process for becoming a coach.

Mission Statement:

“MSDC advocates for quality research-based professional development policies and practices to increase the capacity of those who work to improve student learning.”

MSDC Board of Directors:**President:**

Sam Lopresto
MTIP's Ctr. for Sustained Learning
Regions

President Elect:

Dr. Dan Jonker
Ottawa Area ISD

Treasurer:

Dr. Amy Colton
Colton, Langer & Assoc.

Secretary:

Shug Brandell
MI Coalition of Essential Schools

Members at Large:

Ben Boerkoel
Kent ISD

Theodore J Gardella
Lakeville Public Schools

Dr. Irma Hamilton
New Vision Consulting

Bob Harris
MEA

Dr. Steve Hecker
MDE

Nicole Huff
Detroit Community Schools

Dr. Fran Loose
MDE

Cheryl Poole
Eaton ISD

Dr. Rod Rock
Saginaw ISD

Dr. Judy Schaftenaar
Possibilities, Inc.

Dr. Joanne Simmons
Grand Rapids Public Schools

Gloria Donaldson-Waters
GJ Waters & Assoc.

“Reaching and Teaching Struggling Learners”

Initiative by Leisa Gallagher, MDE

Last year, staff from more than a dozen middle and high school building teams spent six professional days exploring how to be successful with a cohort of fifteen struggling students in each of their buildings. These teams studied student engagement and academic achievement data to assure that the relationships, rigor, and relevance were available to each of these students. The tactic appears to have been worth the effort. These students were identified, because staff perceived them to be hard for the staff to reach and/or hard to teach. Teams used the School Improvement Framework as a key reference for organizing the initiative. Within the year, each building had a stronger sense of collective efficacy and attributed much of the unexpected positive results to their shared leadership and teaming. Buildings reported a shift in the depth of their school improvement planning, a reduction in the achievement gap for students living in generational poverty, and an increased value for secondary literacy. The success of the pilot year led to this year's Reaching and Teaching Struggling Learners Initiative.

Particular to secondary level culture, teachers often express a sense of isolation when working with 'struggling learners'. This initiative continues to explore how increasing the social and instructional supports for staff will lead to increased academic success for students who experience barriers to learning. This year, sixteen teams are participating. Teams in both years have expressed a particular value for shared leadership. Educators in general, special, and career education have committed to

common planning time and problem solving for the benefit of their students.

These interdisciplinary teams acted as a learning community and shared Michigan specific strategies with one another. Last year's group reported that by the end of the first semester, only one student in one building failed to pass the first semester. While fifteen students in each building only adds up to approximately three hundred students overall, the impact of their students' success on the staff was palpable. Teams reported the following successes:

- School improvement leaders were reporting that they were 'seeing' the needs of these students for, perhaps the first time.
- By the end of the last year, one principal had made the commitment to shift their strongest teacher to work on their new 'Ninth Grade Academy'.
- Another principal reported that the systemic efforts taken to reach these fifteen students had resulted in closing the achievement gap between their Title I subgroup and students not living in poverty.

This action research effort has been supported by a partnership of organizations: a Michigan IDEA Partnership grant, the Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education, the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals, the Michigan Education Association, and the Michigan Department of Education. For more information, please contact Dr. Doug McCall at 517-241-4420 or e-mail mccald@michigan.gov.

Be the Change We Want to See?

by Dr. Judy Schaftenaar

Each time I get in “perfectionist paralysis” I find wonderful thinkers to help jump start my professional learning.

Recently I read a small book entitled, *QBO: The Question Behind the Question: What to Really Ask Yourself to Eliminate Blame, Complaining, and Procrastination*, by John G. Miller. It focuses on personal accountability and is an intriguing concept to apply to the field of education. It seems in the current milieu, we in education are using each other to blame for lack of “something” critical to our work being successful. The author suggests that any question that we pose not be framed in the “Why can’t they . . . ?” format but rather as “How can I . . . ?” or “What can I . . . ?”

This is exemplified by the wonderful richness of the NSDC Standards for professional development and the companion piece that helps us take personal responsibility, the Innovation Configuration (IC). Often in a field as complex as education, it is difficult to know what to do. The NSDC Standards and IC lift the burden of knowing just what to ask by offering suggestions that each of us can do from our particular perspective in the education family. It allows us to pursue the goal that drew us to education in the first place. That goal was the excitement of student learning and creating the context for making that happen. It is time to personally review the NSDC material and to ask for a discussion of our tasks and roles to create the context of learning for all.

In addition to work in the schools, we need to speak and act for education in our larger context. In this year of political decision-making, we can also remember our personal accountability in another way. Bob Keeshon, aka, Caption Kangaroo, became active politically and challenged politicians with the thought that “Kids need more powerful friends.” Who are the powerful people who will actually help us do the work of educating our kids in America? We need to find out.

In this election year, many issues will create the context for children and families to thrive – the economy, health insurance, and certainly education. How can we put the spotlight on children’s needs in this context? Years ago, a political action group challenged politicians with a campaign of questions beginning with “Who’s for kids, and who’s just kidding?” Can we ask that question as individuals locally and as groups and voters nationally?

With the aid of the Internet and the vast amount of analysis of candidates’ records we might be able to ascertain “who’s for kids” and share our learning with others.

In closing, personal accountability is difficult but essential for educators. Ghandi was quoted that we should “Be the change you want to see.” Can we muster the energy to “Be the change” both locally and nationally?



TEACHER FELLOWSHIPS

While in Texas, Secretary Spellings announced the creation of Teaching Ambassador Fellowship positions at the Department for the 2008-09 academic year. These positions will offer highly motivated and innovative public school teachers the opportunity to contribute their knowledge and experience to the national dialogue on education. The program includes two tracks. Up to five Washington Fellows will become full-time federal employees in Washington, D.C., participating in policy discussions and working on education programs. Up to 20 Classroom Fellows will remain at their local schools under their regular teaching contracts and be paid for various assignments and projects throughout the school year on a part-time basis. All fellows will be selected on their record of leadership, impact on student achievement, and potential for contribution to the field. Only highly qualified public school teachers who have spent at least three years in the classroom are eligible to apply. And, to ensure collaboration, fellows must have the full support of their principals. Applications are due by April 7. Fellows will be named by early summer.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/programs/teacherfellowship/>

Effective Professional Learning Under Oath by Dr. Rod Rock

Recently, I went to my County Clerk to apply for a passport. The passport process includes supplying a copy of my birth certificate, completing a written application, displaying my drivers license, paying an exorbitant fee, and swearing—under oath and with my right hand raised—that the information provided in the application is true and accurate. In my nearly 40 years of living in these United States, this is the first time I have had to make a pledge, under oath.

As I left the courthouse, I saw images on the sides of buildings depicting of the early years of our country, including the stars and stripes and some of our founding fathers. It reminded me that the oath I had just given was rooted deeply in history. I gave my word, and the person witnessing my oath accepted it as the truth, much like our forefathers pledged their allegiance to each other and to the tenets of freedom, liberty, and sovereignty. To think that America was founded on the principles that a person's pledge is valid, worthy of acceptance, and a guarantee to follow through, despite unforeseeable obstacles, is indeed a powerful idea that has withstood the test of time and provided the impetus for countless, notable achievements.

Similarly, we as members of the National Staff Development Council pledged to organize our schools in such a way that "Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves." Concomitantly, we are collectively committed to the following standards of staff development:

Context Standards

Staff development that improves the learning of all students:

- Organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district

- Requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement
- Requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration

Process Standards

Staff development that improves the learning of all students:

- Uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement
- Uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact
- Prepares educators to apply research to decision making
- Uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal
- Applies knowledge about human learning and change
- Provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate

Content Standards

Staff development that improves the learning of all students:

- Prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement
- Deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately
- Provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately

As we approach the mid-point of another school year, it seems timely to examine not only our pledge toward creating the conditions under which every teacher engages in effective professional learning, but to look for evidence within our organization for

the actual implementation of these standards. Toward this end, take the time to consider this question with colleagues from within your school:

Does staff development in our school measure up to NSDCs' standards?

As you reflect together, you will likely find that your school falls toward one end of the continuum of implementation. Stated another way, you will realize that you have collectively implemented, to some degree, each of the standards. Realizing this, you will want to dig more deeply, think more critically, and plan more rigorously. This process of reflection will move you along. Furthermore, you and your colleagues will solidify the fact that your oath, much like that of our founding fathers, is a collective guarantee to continue toward a desired state, despite the obstacles you encounter along the way.

