

Elk Grove Associate Feedback
School: Valley HS
Associate: Doug Lillydahl

Visit 1: 10/3/2016

What was accomplished?

I met with the principal (Richard Gutierrez), instructional coach (Kristina Richardson), and the Academic Program Coordinator James Welcome to review goals for the day and get updates on progress since our planning call. I met with the leadership team of the school -- department chairs from each area -- and solicited input on successes and challenges before running a mini-training on sharpening the WHY in their communication with their departments. Principal Gutierrez, Ms. Richardson and I met with 4 teams from the core academic departments to interview them about their practices and beliefs. We then reflected on our learning and insights for the day and set goals for the short and long term. We mapped out my next visit on November 17th as well.

What are the next steps?

1- Improve the vision and WHY communication -- it needs to be more frequent, include local and researched examples of success, and flow through the administrative group and leadership team to the teachers, union leadership, new teachers, and teachers. 2- Make decisions about being loose versus tight on the various elements of minutes, agendas, and roles that will occur during the weekly collaborative time.

What homework was assigned?

They are going to provide me with examples and evidence of the two next steps for review and reflection before or during my next visit. Spelling corrected in this version!

Visit 2: 11/17/2016

What was accomplished?

The core administrative team of the principal (Richard Gutierrez), instructional coach (Kristina Richardson), and Academic Coordinator (James Welcome) spent much of the day exploring and applying loose-tight leadership thinking. We had frank and productive discussions about how to rely on moral reasoning and teacher learning for motivating as many of the faculty as possible-- acknowledging that demanding compliance is a last and difficult resort. We reviewed and refined last session's focus (and homework) on messaging. We reviewed messaging that has been successful and critiqued messaging that was overly logical, but not appealing enough to metaphor or emotion. We decided to keep it simple. Focus on big picture concepts and very limited details. The team agreed to focus on WHY: because teacher learning leads to improved learning for ALL students and WHAT/HOW: The four critical questions of a PLC. Everything else is a coached, individualized conversation. This avoids people thinking that PLC's are about processes, forms, and agendas instead of teacher learning→ student learning. In our second session with the DC of counseling (but missing the 3 VPs) we discussed large goals/SMART goals for the school and the need for those to galvanize the faculty. Since the state has suspended the exit exam and the district is no longer providing a clear set of goals, there was some frustration about lack of unity on staff. We discussed that a

unifying goal might well be appropriate, as long as there is buy-in created. I expressed concern that we not add too many layers of communication and priority too quickly for fear of losing focus. I think a planned and timed roll out of a school-wide goal – with input from a guiding coalition of campus leaders would be best. In the third session -- three x twenty-five minute sessions with teacher teams, we listened to concerns raised by the Biology, Math 1, and VAPA teams. We reviewed PLC theory as it related to each team.

What are the next steps?

The short term goals of the team are to focus communication and the administrative team work on highlighting the 4 Critical Questions of a PLC team. They plan to provide department chairs with training on the four questions and link it back to the goal of professional learning. They will disperse the 4 questions much more widely to staff and administrators-- and include it in school-wide communication. They will select 2 teams (from Social Studies and Science) to come in and do a data analysis dive for about :45-:60 minutes during my next visit on 1/23-- and then use the results of that inquiry as a model for another department chair meeting the next day. In short, the goal is to raise the awareness of the 4 questions and the WHY behind them in the consciousness of the school.

What homework was assigned?

See above.

What was accomplished?

Visit 3: 1/23/17

Today began with an update on short and long term goals. We discussed the consistent messaging they were trying to send in their leadership team and school-wide communications. Despite some pushback on the part of some that the PLC thing is being “overdone” they have pushed on with the task of framing the work positively. As far as bring the APs into more leadership training, there has been some progress, and general openness on the part of the APs, but they are difficult to gather and work with as a group given the breadth of their daily tasks.

Then, instructional coach Kristina Richardson, Principal Richard Gutierrez, and I met with two curriculum teams (Math 1 and Earth Science in turn) to model and guide a data discussion using data that they brought. In these 50 minute sessions we identified a skill –based learning target, examined samples of high-middle-and low performance by students, analyzed misconceptions or learning gaps, and then committed to an instructional response.

After a meeting with two APs regarding Critical Issues for Team Consideration, I reconvened with the administrative team and set goals for the time before my next visit. During the goal-setting session, they created a Google Form for teams to briefly report their team learning and team decisions/commitments for each weekly meeting.

What are the next steps?

Short term goals we set included the following:

- To improve reception of the PLC communication:
 - o By celebrating progress by teams and students more deliberately.
 - o By judiciously using the PLC label itself, and speaking more directly about building culture, teams, collaboration, and teacher learning. We want to avoid PLC's becoming "another program" or teachers who were here for earlier attempts at installing PLC culture to think that they have the PLC-thing "finished" and tune out. The rationale for these topics is still teacher learning for student success.
- To more directly train the team leaders in methods of data analysis, discussion facilitation, and decision-making. Department chairs are an important part of support, but lack sufficient training and time.
- To have the administrative team require and monitor that decisions, products, and/or action steps come from each team each meeting. The new Google Form collection tool will be implemented 1/31.
- I recommended that the school look into opportunities to send a cadre of leaders to a June PLC at Work Institute.

What homework was assigned?

See above.

What was accomplished?

Visit 4: 3/17/17

Since our last meeting: I met with Richard Gutierrez, Kristina Richardson, and James Welcome to debrief their "homework" from last meeting. The rollout of a post-team meeting accomplishment log had been delayed. In two sessions of seventy-five minutes, I met with roughly a dozen department chairs and team leaders to provide practical strategies and scenario practice with tools to support the 3 pillars of PLC's on teams (and especially considering resistors). We also had discussions around assuming positive intentions when dealing with faculty and union representatives. We explored the idea deeply and tried hard to bust through the notion that others who do not participate or show enthusiasm for collaborative teaming have reasons they find valid and are not "evil." Thus it is incumbent upon us to engage with them and build professional, if not personal, relationships and norms that allow us to understand them. Then our efforts to create change are greatly bolstered by that knowledge.

What are the next steps?

1. Deliberately involve union representation in the guiding coalition of the site.
2. Recapturing the initial enthusiasm for PLCs by the principal and administration of the school.
3. Promote the components of PLCs (the 3 pillars, basically) into the daily work they do.

What homework was assigned?

None assigned