

Culture Clubs: Shrinking Our Growing Building Through Small Groups

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Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:

Burnett Creek has experienced tremendous growth over the last five years. Not only have we added students, but we have also added staff. A once small, tight-knit building has now begun to experience growing pains. With that growth, new hires have been added. Teachers often lose touch with each other personally and professionally. Just like our new teachers can feel lost, our mentor teachers often become neglected. We were missing out on opportunities for staff to talk to each other in a confidential outside of their grade level teams. We needed to attempt to redefine Burnett Creek's culture. Therefore, the purpose of our action research was to "shrink our building" through devoted, small group time.

Statement of Your Team's Wondering:

With this purpose, we wondered if we could create small groups that met frequently to tackle all types of topic (personally and professionally).

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into our wondering, we relied on our Marzano Level 1 survey data. We wondered how we could "shrink" our growing building and place mentor teachers with new hires to positively shape our building culture. How can we create/cultivate relationships within our building that will ultimately lead to staff retention? We also wanted staff to define who sits at their "table" and their "balcony" so to speak.

Once the July seminar was over, we brainstormed how we could go about achieving our goal. Our team met behind closed doors and essentially held a "draft". We started our draft with the staff members in our building who would be considered mentors. We also defined that the group should not exceed three members. We considered possible mentor/mentee relationships and who potentially should not be in a group. We did not want to force something that was not there.

The idea/concept was introduced at a staff meeting. I also communicated to staff that we would dedicate professional development time to these meetings. I provided the basic structure for time management in a PLC meeting. The groups would then define their norms. The topics for each meeting varied greatly - curricular, climate/culture, opportunity to vent/chat, and C.L.A.S.S.

Stating Your Team's Learning and Supporting it with Data:

We learned that these small groups were greatly needed at Burnett Creek. We also learned that our staff added new people to their "balconies" and "tables". We also knew that some groups would value it more than others. As we look towards the future we know that we need to devote more time to these meetings.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

The journey through IPLI year two has been amazing. Through this process we learned that we had to go back to basics for our building. The culture/climate is paramount to our building's success year in and year out. We recognize that our culture clubs have to be a multi-year commitment for our staff to actually form meaningful relationships. This process has also strengthened our foundation in C.L.A.S.S. We are grateful for this opportunity to make Burnett Creek a better place!

References:

N/A