

Working Together to Reach a Shared Vision

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Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:

Based on analyzing faculty and HRS survey data the team identified a need to improve the culture and effectiveness of our Professional Learning Community. The data indicated a general lack of understanding in regards to the direction and role of Professional Learning Communities. In addition, the survey data indicated a need for increased collaboration in decision making. As a result of reflection and analysis, the leadership team designed specific interventions to address the data. Therefore, the purpose of our action research was to provide clarity to the PLC process as well as to provide increased collaborative opportunities for the faculty.

Statement of Your Team's Wondering:

With this purpose, we wondered if by initiating faculty collaborative opportunities – will we see improvement in the climate and effectiveness of our professional learning community?

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into our wondering, we sought ways to increase faculty collaborative opportunities. The first opportunity was an instructional coaching program led by our teacher leaders. During PLC, teachers determined areas of instructional focus and need, and then worked together to learn, observe, and reflect on best practices. The second opportunity conducted during PLC was an ISTEP Boot Camp created and designed by faculty with the intent of including all stakeholders into the decision-making process. The overarching goal of both PLC programs was to increase faculty collaborative opportunities with the hope of providing clarity and improving attitudes.

The team collected data through observation, interviews and pre and post surveys. Utilizing the PLC video provided by IPLI, we defined our objectives and shared the initial stakeholder data with the faculty. Through interviews and observations, faculty attitudes and beliefs were monitored and addressed so that modifications could be utilized throughout.

Upon conclusion of both interventions, faculty attitudes and beliefs were measured using a post-survey questionnaire. Data was collected over the course three months while the interventions were in progress. The faculty met once per week to discuss successes and to make adjustments as needed.

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

As a result of analyzing our data, two important things we learned include: 1) the importance of collaborative planning, and 2) increasing opportunities helps to raise faculty morale and a sense of value.

The initial data indicated a “disconnect” in regards to PLC purpose and decision making. Data showed faculty attitudes and beliefs were confused or neutral when considering the effectiveness of our PLC's. Further,

faculty surveys reinforced HRC data. Specifically, school culture survey data indicated “collaborative leadership” and “teacher collaboration” as having the highest standard deviation – which highlights the need to create a PLC environment that ensures all stakeholders have a shared vision.

Post survey results revealed a faculty more in tune with collaboration and possessing a stronger sense of ownership in the PLC process. 88.9% of teachers report that they believe the faculty treats one another with respect while 83.3% of the faculty believes their input is valued. Faculty indicated that overall they believed the process increased feelings of trust and respect between teachers and administration.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

Overall, the AR project has been extremely beneficial to our school. Most importantly, it has brought a new level of shared leadership and decision-making to the table. Prior to the AR project, the principal would make a “standing offer” for anyone interested to join the PLC planning team or other school leadership opportunities. The AR project was initiated by real data which required an action plan to address. The process of addressing the data, administrators working closely with teachers and teachers working closely with teachers was by far the best outcome of the project. The level of trust between all stakeholders rose considerably. The process also made it more difficult for teachers to hide – while you aren’t going to crack every nut, far more teachers than normal actively engaged in the interventions to address the HRS data.

It is interesting that the teacher leaders that collaborated on the AR project were not the original teachers to be asked. These teachers know this and have nicknamed themselves the “B Team”. However, not surprisingly they have worked hard and have gone a long way to show that teacher leaders can be any faculty member. Their leadership has had a positive impact and influence on other faculty members.

The AR Project experience underscores the importance of collaborative leadership and including as many people “under the tent” as possible. I think we have learned to use data to guide our decision making while ensuring collaborative opportunities exist. As a result of the AR project, we have conducted a day-long leadership meeting to determine next steps and interventions for the next school year.

References:

N/A