

Allocate the Time - Keeping the Focus on Improving Instruction: Top Ten Recommendations

Time is arguably our most valuable resource and how we apportion our time as leaders speaks eloquently about what we truly value. Every school year is a cavalcade of competing agendas, unforeseen mandates, urgent problems to solve and the like. While the chaos of “keeping the ship afloat” will no doubt require a certain amount of regular attention, intentionally designing a handful of powerful routines or commitments to keep instructional improvement “front and center” is clearly a wise practice. The “Top Ten” list below describes some of the most powerful structures I’ve observed highly successful administrators utilizing to develop the “laser like” focus on improving teaching so key to increasing school-wide student achievement. A common instructional framework is used across ALL formats to foster Collaborative Coherence., KF 2013

- 1) Commit to a minimum number of minutes per week of being in classrooms walk throughs etc. – build it into your calendar, schedule around it... (at HS include AP/Deans, etc).
- 2) Build in a min. number of minutes per faculty meeting dedicated to the specifics of instructional improvement (not simply discussion) – esp. Video critique/analysis and demonstration/simulation plus critique/analysis.
- 3) Peer Coaching – EVERY teacher a coach – every 2-4 weeks each member of the PLC observe a designated team member’s class (being with Leadership Team volunteers). Debrief collectively at the next PLC meeting (admin not involved in these observations)
- 4) Continually refine and deepen the professional skills of giving/receiving specific instructional feedback, ALL teachers & admin. team. Include candid conversations re: each individual’s level of comfort both giving and receiving instructional feedback.
- 5) Commit to a min. number of team coaching Learning Walks (LW) per semester, eventually involving the entire faculty in both providing and receiving instructional feedback. LW teams within and across disciplines and grade levels.
- 6) Each faculty member chooses a Learning Partner (LP) and commits to a min. number of LP observations per semester. (change partners at least once per year, provide evidence/feedback to admin. re: what was observed/learned/etc.)
- 7) Invite each teacher to video 10-30 min. of their teaching (iPhone, iPad, flip camera, etc.) and watch the video by themselves; reflect, make notes using LW tool and all commit to bring their reflections to the next PLC and discuss the process (personally and professionally).
- 8) Begin the process of inviting courageous teacher leaders to shoot videos in their classes (low tech, i-phone, home cam corder etc.) – Edit out clips of 2 – 7/8 min. to be used in faculty, PLC, peer, and/or grade level meetings. Eventually expand to include everyone.
- 9) Invite district admin. to join site admin in doing demonstration lessons during Learning Walks and, for the courageous administrators – video the lesson to show how there is nothing to fear in video and giving/receiving feedback (major credibility enhancer!) – the more we ALL walk the talk, “ be the change what we want to see” as Gandhi once said – very powerful indeed!

10) Develop local Wiki and other tech based internet sites to host your video library, endless options to share/explore/inquire and such.