



Increasing Capacity

Volume 1, Issue 1—Devoted to increasing educators' awareness of professional development activities throughout the district and how they relate to our mission, beliefs and values.

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Focused Professional Development Increases Student Achievement & Growth

What do we know about professional development? What do we know about the teacher-student learning relationship?

There has been a great deal of research over the past 20 years which has provided us with overwhelming evidence that teachers make an enormous difference as it relates to student growth. Secondly, while the characteristics that influence the effectiveness of PD are multiple and complex (Guskey, 2003) we know that there are some defining characteristics that deem professional development practices effective.

Our hope is to use this local publication to accomplish several aims. First, we would like to provide a quarterly update to the certificated staff in the district as to what constitutes effective professional development and how it can be used to help increase the capacity of our staff to help students achieve and grow. In addition, we would like to increase the staffs' awareness of the district's continuous improvement plan. Third, we intend to describe the professional development experiences that teachers are taking part in across the district in order to increase our collective aware-

ness of what is going on. This should help people realize that regardless of what grade or building you happen to be teaching in, we have a set of common goals that we're all working towards and that while we may be in different places when these goals are considered, they are nevertheless common.

While the professional development that educators receive should focus on helping us get better at what we do, in order to truly unlock its potential it is imperative that it be rooted within a well articulated and understood framework. If you'll recall baseline data was gathered on a concept called the Professional Learning Community. This concept is not new to the field of education or corporate America for that matter. Research illustrates that companies and school districts that have made the jump from "good to great (Collins, 2001)" have a set of common characteristics that include:

a common vision, mission, values and beliefs that guide the organization coupled with a dedication to using data to guide all decision making. In addition,

great companies and districts are focused on what they can be the best at and they demonstrate an unrelenting focus. Our focus is on student achievement and growth. As a result, our resources (financial and human) should be devoted towards helping us fulfill these aims.

The results of the surveys that our certificated staff graciously took will soon be reviewed. The data will be reviewed with the board, administrators and teachers in order to assist with the district's professional development initiatives.

Moving forward, building staff will use the data that was provided via the surveys in order to begin to generate conversations about what values and beliefs the staff have reached consensus on.

District CIP Focus Areas

- Annually receive an Excellent rating, meet all Federal AYP requirements and maintain local standards of educational quality.
- Fund and efficiently manage budgets to provide quality programs, facilities and staffing.
- Upgrade and maintain facilities and technologies to provide safe, cost effective and educationally appropriate environments for students and staff.
- Continue to promote two-way communication among all Olmsted Falls stakeholders (district, building and community members).

CIP Guiding Beliefs

- Education is the cornerstone to our society.
- Everyone can learn and has the right to be educated to potential.
- Education should be well balanced and standards-based.
- Decisions should be data-based.
- Education rests on working relationships.
- Learning occurs in a disciplined environment.
- Quality education requires an investment from the local community and State of Ohio.



The Creation of a 3rd through 8th Grade Educational Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) in Ohio

With the passing of Ohio House Bill 3, the Ohio Legislature indicated that the ODE must begin using a “value-added progress dimension” into its accountability system. Value added provides a measure of academic gain for a group of students over a specific period of time that is calculated by applying a statistical methodology to individual student achievement data derived from the achievement tests.



The Educational Value Added Assessment System (EVAAS) uses Ohio’s achievement tests (only reading and math) and applies a valid and reliable metric in order to determine

if Olmsted Falls students made more than expected growth, expected growth or less than expected growth.

Our goal is to aggressively increase our teachers’ understanding of EVAAS and then provide staff with PD experiences that have been proven to have an impact on student growth. The staff at Olmsted Falls Middle School staff was the first group to experience Phase I of the district’s Value Added Assessment professional development. There are 2 more phases to this professional development. Next we will teach teachers how to understand and interpret the value added data. We will next work with the Fitch Staff.

The district currently has two district value added specialists (Jim Lloyd and Carol Rami). Throughout the school

year we will look to increase the capacity of our building administrators so that they can lead this initiative with their respective staff members. It is important to remember that Ohio’s educators now need to not only understand the factors that affect student achievement, but those that have an impact on student growth as well.

This topic will be generating a considerable amount of interest in the field of education and within the local media now and in the future.



Fitch Focuses on the Power of Indicators

Fourth and Fifth Grade teachers at Fitch recently spent a half-day engaged in a job embedded professional development activity.

The half-day in-service focused on five objectives that helped teachers: 1) Develop a greater understanding of the future of professional development in the district; 2) have a better understanding of the keys to quality assessment; 3) understand the differences between norms and standards; 4) have a greater practical understanding of how to make standards work and 5) learn a process to identify the essential learning outcomes that we called *power indicators*.

While what students are supposed to know and be able to do has been largely defined for us via the academic content standards, it is up to educators to determine when and how to teach the learning targets.

Our focus has moved away from teach, assess, grade and move on. It has moved towards this scenario—select the things that students need to know from the academic content standards, design an assessment through which students will have an

opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge and skills to meet the standard(s), decide what learning opportunities students will need to learn those things, plan instruction to provide adequate opportunity and use assessment data to give feedback, re-teach or move to the next level. Our current reality in education is that states

Power indicators focus on the essential curriculum. These are the safety net learning targets that are critical to future learning.

have created standards that are balanced and comprehensive yet the number of days in the school year has remained fixed while the quantity of curriculum has expanded (Reeves, 1996). We can encourage teachers to engage in simple coverage of curriculum that is increasingly superficial and use rapid speech or we can use the process of power indicator identification as an alternative and shift from what must be

taught to what must be learned.

Fitch teachers were actively engaged in this process and have begun the process of using the criteria of **endurance** (Will the indicator provide students with knowledge and skills beyond a single test date?), **leverage** (Will the indicator provide knowledge and skills that will be of value in multiple disciplines?) and **foundation** (Will the indicator provide students with essential knowledge and skills necessary for success in the next grade or level of instruction?) to determine the grade level power indicators in English Language Arts. This PD activity helps educators clarify the learning targets as the discussions that they have to reach consensus on whether the indicator is a power indicator is a valuable collaborative experience.

References

- Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great*. Harper Business: New York.
- Guskey, T. (2003). What makes professional development effective? *Phi Delta Kappan*, June, 748-750.
- Reeves, D. (1996). *Making standards work: How to implement standards-based assessments in classroom, school, and district*. Advanced Learning Centers, Inc: Englewood, CO.