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The Impact of Providing Teachers with Collaboration Time, During the School Day, on Student Achievement

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THE IMPACT OF PROVIDING TEACHERS WITH COLLABORATION TIME,
DURING THE SCHOOL DAY, ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.

by

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October 25, 2004

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degree of

Education Specialist

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Abstract

Because many forms of professional development require teachers and others to work together (e.g., participation in formal mentoring programs and networking with teachers in other schools), skill building in collaboration is often the prescribed approach. Skills in working with others are especially important if the aim of professional development is change (Guskey, 1995). This ethnographic study examines the effect on student achievement by providing teachers with collaboration time during the school day. The study was conducted at a rural middle school. In order for student achievement to improve, schools must search for innovative methods. By restructuring the school day, this principal was able to build collaboration time into the staff's schedule.

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CHAPTER I

Collaboration Time for Teachers Improves Student Achievement

Introduction

Because many forms of professional development require teachers and others to work together (e.g., participation in formal mentoring programs and networking with teachers in other schools), skill building in collaboration is often the prescribed approach. Skills in working with others are especially important if the aim of professional development efforts is change (Guskey, 1995).

Despite school-reform literature full of recommendations for teacher collaboration, the realities of large schools coupled with traditional top-down models of leadership incline schools toward practices the literature declares ineffective. If educators believe students can accomplish more collectively than individually, if educators believe collaboration produces greater gains in student achievement, and if educators truly want to work together, how can educators make collaboration the norm (Gideon, 2002)?

Many attempts at collaboration have failed because the innovations or recommendations, although ultimately benefiting teacher and students were not immediately evident or because teachers were often asked to meet before or after their regular workday—when they were tired and had other responsibilities. If educators truly believe that teacher collaboration is the key to school improvement, it must be part of the regular work of teachers and administrators. (Gideon, 2002).

In order to enhance organizational capacity and boost student learning,

educators should work on building a professional community characterized by shared purpose, collaborative activity, and collective responsibility among staff (Newmann & Raywid, 1996, p. 13).

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was to report the findings from survey data collected to determine if giving teachers collaboration time, during the school day, improved student achievement.

Rationale for Study

Staffing models must accommodate dramatic new approaches to professional development, where teachers have up to 10 hours a week to work with each other on solving the educational problems of their students (Barry, 2001). The purpose of this study explored and provided insight on providing teachers with collaboration time, during the school day, and its impact, if any, on student achievement.

To put it as succinctly as possible, if educators want to change and improve the climate and outcomes of schooling both for students and teachers, there are features of the school culture that have to be changed, and if it is not changed, any well-intentioned efforts will be defeated. (Sarason 1996, p. 340).

“The reform movement focuses on structural and curricular changes as the main ingredients of effective schools, but pays less attention to the day-to-day work of teachers...By emphasizing needed changes in the culture of the schools and the daily practice of professionals, the reform movement can concentrate on the heart of the school—the teaching and learning process (Louis, Kruse, and Raywid 1996, p. 9)”

Hypothesis

Teachers, given collaboration time, during the school day, improve student achievement.

Limitations of the Study

The prior experience of a teacher (or any other profession) was not a controllable factor in the selection of the participants. Furthermore, neither their years of experience in one district versus another nor their previous course of study in a teacher training institution of higher learning were controllable. For the purpose of this study, the factors of race, gender, demographics, and age were not addressed. Additionally, factors such as district size and number of teachers per district were not evaluated.

The participants were teachers who have acquired at least one year of teaching experience. The participants were employed as teachers during the 2002-2003 academic year. This study was conducted using 25 teachers employed by the Boonville R-1 School District, assigned to Laura Speed Elliott Middle School, Boonville, Missouri.

Definitions

Administrator and Principal were interchangeable terms used to identify the subjects as well as the positions studied.

Collaboration time is time set aside during the school day for teachers to reflect, discuss and plan for instruction. A schedule has been worked out so each grade and department will have time to collaborate.

Student Achievement as defined by this study will focus on improvement to students' scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, Missouri Assessment Program, Developmental Reading Assessment and the Gates MacGinitie Reading tests. It will also look at the number of students who have qualified for membership in the school National Junior Honor Society, and have been placed on the Principal's Honor Roll.

Loss Of Privilege (LOP) as defined by this study is used when students fail to meet prerequisite requirements dealing with academic, attendance and behavior. Students would lose the privilege granted to all students who meet these requirements.

LOP Teachers are teachers who supervise students during lunch and recess time.

Summary

“Without the opportunity for collaborative planning, academic standards represent just another set of unreachable expectations for teachers and students. Collaboration provides the essential mechanism for translating academic standards into engaging, interdisciplinary learning activities and assessment strategies that help young adolescents realize their full learning potential (Guiton et al., 1995, pp. 91-92).”

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Currently, both critics and critical friends of education warn that public schools are in peril. (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 53-54) The chairman of IBM blasts public education as a "bureaucratic monopoly" that has been given one last chance to save itself before being "abandoned across the board" (Gerstneer et al., 1994 p.22). And after 10 years of research on the relation between the public and its schools, the president of the Kettering Foundation concluded: "The research forces me to say something I never thought I would say or even think. The public school system, as we know it may not survive into the next century" (Matthews 1997, p.741). Reformers warn educators that unless they move quickly to transform their schools in dramatic ways, "public schools will not be a vital component of America's system of education in the twenty-first century." "With this in mind, the need for educational reform must be looked at by the educational community (Phil Schlechty 1997)."

Theory

If a teaching staff wants to enhance their organizational capacity to boost student learning, it should work on building a professional community that is characterized by shared purpose, collaborative activity, and collective responsibility among staff. For a school's staff to improve student achievement they must come up with new ways of

involving teachers in the improvement process. It is difficult to overstate the importance of collaborative teams in the improvement process (Newmann & Whelage, 1995, p. 37).

Research

Fullan (1993) stresses their importance in *Change Forces*:

The ability to collaborate—on both a large and small scale—is one of the core requisites of post modern society....[I]n short, without collaborative skills and relationships it is not possible to learn and to continue to learn as much as you need in order to be an agent for social improvement. (pp. 17-18).

Ross, Smith, and Roberts (1994) refer to the collective inquiry process as “the team learning wheel” and identify four steps in that process:

1. Public reflection—members of the team talk about their assumptions and beliefs and challenge each other gently but relentlessly.
2. Shared meaning—the team arrives at common ground, shared insights.
3. Joint planning—the team designs action steps, and initiative to test their shared insights.
4. Coordinated action—the team carries out the action plan. This action need not be joint action but can be carried out independently by the members of the team.

For the teacher, teams provide the kind of collaborative work group that is increasingly viewed as vital to organizational productivity across a wide range of professions (Jackson, A., & Davis, G., 2000). Peter Senge (1990), one of the nation’s leading experts on organizational behavior, calls workplace teams essential to enable professionals to learn together and to take advantage of collective thought that goes beyond any one individual’s understanding (Senge, 1990, pp. 10, 233-296). Without the opportunity for collaborative planning, academic standards represent just another set of

unreachable expectations for teachers and students. Teams provide the essential mechanism for translating academic standards into engaging, interdisciplinary learning activities and assessment strategies (Guiton et al., 1995, pp. 91-92) that help young adolescents realize their full learning potential.

The National Center for Public Education and Social Policy reports that to affect student outcomes positively, teachers need three to four hours of common planning time per week, divided, for example, into four or five daily periods of at least 45 minutes, preferably an hour a day. The center's ongoing research suggests that when middle school teams have adequate planning time, they are better able to integrate curriculum across subject areas, coordinate student assignments, assessments, and other aspects of instruction, and involve parents in their children's education, and contact health and other services to address behavioral issues or other concerns that affect learning (Erb & Stevenson, 1999, pp. 47-48).

Research from the Michigan Middle Start Initiative also shows that as the amount of common planning time increases, the quality of team interactions and the frequency of desired instructional practices increases. Moreover, the highest increases in average seventh-grade reading and mathematics scores over a two-year period were recorded by schools that provided high levels of common planning time, defined as a minimum of four meetings of at least 30 minutes each week (Mertens et al., 1998).

Characteristics of effective schools (Purkey and Smith, 1983) listed:

A. Structural Variables

1. School site management
2. Strong leadership

3. Staff stability
4. Curriculum articulation and organization
5. Staff Development
6. Parental involvement and support
7. School wide recognition of academic Success
8. Maximized learning time
9. District support

B. Process Variables

1. Collaborative planning and collegial relationships
2. Sense of community
3. Clear goals and high expectations that are commonly shared
4. Order and discipline

Sarason (1996) contends that schools foster a culture of individuals rather than the culture of a group. He concludes that teachers are apt to focus on their personal concerns because there are absolutely no forums or traditions that present them with opportunities to come together to discuss the practical problems and issues of the classroom and the school. Separated by their classrooms and packed teaching schedules, teachers rarely work or talk together about teaching practices (Darling-Hammond, 1995, p. 172).

Collaborative structures enable teachers to test their ideas about teaching and expand their level of expertise by allowing them to hear the ideas of others (Wildman & Niles, 1987). Collaborative structures foster better decisions and increase likelihood of ownership in the decisions (Dillon-Peterson, 1986). Collaboration helps reduce the fear of risk-taking by providing encouragement and moral support (Filding & Schalock, 1985).

Teacher collaboration can be linked to gains in achievement, higher quality solutions to problems, increased confidence among all members of the school community, more systematic assistance to beginning teachers, and an increased pool of ideas, materials and methods (Klein et al., 1996).

Creating a collaborative environment has been described as “the single most important factor” for successful school improvement initiatives and “the first order of business” for those seeking to enhance the effectiveness of their school (Eastwood & Louis, 1992, p. 215). The best structure for fostering collaboration is the team—“the basic building block of the intelligent organization” (Pinchot & Pinchot 1993, p. 66) and the “essence of a learning organization” (Dilworth, 1995, p. 252). Senge et al. (1994) contend “history has brought us to a moment where teams are recognized as a critical component of every enterprise—the predominant unity for decision making and getting things done” (p. 354). Arranging personnel into teams has also been identified as an important factor linked to the process of improving schools (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Newman, 1996). Building collaborative cultures requires that schools create structures to ensure that every staff member is assigned to a team that works together on substantive issues.

Time for collaboration must be built into the school day and year. The way in which a school structures its time can have a tremendous impact upon commitment to the change process. This fact is often overlooked in school improvement initiatives. Typically, if teachers are given any time to collaborate on improvement projects, the time is offered as an add-on (after school or on Saturdays) rather than incorporated as an integral part of the school day (DuFour & Eaker 1998, pp.121).

The lack of time for collaboration is a product of the factory model upon which schools are organized. The American vision of education has traditionally called for teachers to instruct large groups of students for virtually the entire school day. Thus, the other tasks of teaching—preparation, planning, curriculum development, collaborating with colleagues, etc.—are often deemed to be so unimportant that little or no time is provided for them (Darling-Hammond, 1995).

The schools that are successful in implementing significant change regard collaborative time for teachers as a critical resource—an essential tool that enables teachers to enhance their individual and collective effectiveness (Louis, Kruse, & Marks, 1996). One of the key recommendations from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) calls for providing teachers with regularly scheduled time for collegial work and planning. The school that hopes to become a professional learning community must provide teachers with time to reflect, to engage in collective inquiry, to collaborate, and to participate in continuous improvement processes. It will regard these activities as productive and will provide time for them in a systematic way. By providing this time the school will help sustain the improvement initiative.

Summary

Time is perhaps the most important but least available resource in American education. Teachers need time to plan curriculum and develop assessments, refine instructional strategies, and engage in collaborative inquiry to improve student work. Teachers in the United States teach more hours per year and are given less planning time than teachers in any of 15 European countries (Dickinson & Erb, 1997, p. 525). The National Commission on Teaching & America's Future reports that in Germany, Japan,

and China, teachers spend 15 to 20 hours a week working with colleagues, observing other teachers and participating in study groups. These teachers say that they could not succeed if forced to work under the conditions that prevail in American schools (Holland, 1997, p. 12).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Most teachers in the public school systems have very little training in working with their peers in a collaborative setting. They have not received training from their certifying institutions, and very few professional development opportunities to learn more about the possibilities of collaboration with other teachers. With new federal laws and continuing state improvement reviews, the pressure to raise student achievement is being placed solely on the school's teaching staff and administration.

With funding from the state and federal governments remaining stagnant, schools are left to look within to find solutions to achievement concerns. Teachers must be involved in developing the plan to improve student achievement. As education moves into the twenty-first century, the factory model of teaching must be replaced with a collaborative, professional learning community model.

Subjects

The sample of this study consisted of 25 middle school teachers, within the Missouri Public School System that have had less than a maximum of twenty-nine years of total experience as teachers. Each teacher was from Laura Speed Elliott Middle School (LSE), in Boonville, Missouri.

The selection process was composed of practicing middle school teachers. Each candidate was pre-screened in order to eliminate any appointees without a valid Missouri teacher's certificate.

Sampling Procedure

The teachers, who are currently working at LSE, held a staff meeting to discuss the possibility of implementing collaboration time with other teachers into the schedule at Laura Speed Elliott Middle School. After a general discussion about building collaboration time into the schedule, it was decided to survey the staff asking their thoughts on the following agenda items:

1. Any concerns they might have about the proposed change.
2. Solutions to any concerns they might have.
3. What steps should be taken next?
4. Who will be responsible for initiating and/or sustaining these steps?
5. Develop a realistic timeline for each phase of the activity.
6. How will this be evaluated?

Research Setting

The researcher in this study asked the teaching staff to complete a voluntary survey given during the 2002-2003 school year. The participants were allowed to complete the survey wherever they chose. They had approximately one week to complete and return the instrument. The participants were informed that the results would be kept confidential.

Research Design

Each staff member received a ten question survey (see Appendix). The teachers were asked to complete the survey within one week. The teachers who returned the responses back on time were classified as candidates for this informative study.

The survey along with a cover letter stating the guidelines of the study was handed out to the teachers during a staff meeting. The participants had an opportunity to review the survey and ask any questions they had. There were three parts of the survey: (a) personalized information, (b) scale items and (c) open-ended questions. One part of the survey contained a standard questionnaire based on personal and professional characteristics of the teacher and his/her experience. This information was included to differentiate any other variables that may become viable to investigate in future in-depth research.

The final part of the survey consisted of six questions (Listed above) dealing with key parts and milestones in the implementation of teacher collaboration. These questions were designed to gather insight that may not be able to be depicted by the core data.

The core data collected included scale items (Baker, 1991) that pertained to pre-existing conditions, internal and external issues, personal issues, professional support, and induction activities. The information gathered from this data helped to identify concerns many groups of organized institutions deem critical for the future of the teachers of tomorrow.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The data was collected and assessed: (1) the written records of the survey were compared and evaluated, (2) the summaries of data were compared and contrasted using mean scores, and (3) the analysis of data was conducted using a qualitative approach, (4) the open-ended questions were compared and evaluated and listed under each heading.

Summary

This research provided a preliminary examination of teachers regarding their opinion and feelings about building collaboration time, into the school day. The research also details preparations, experiences and professional development teachers have received from universities, conferences and workshops throughout the state of Missouri. The process of preparing teachers for collaboration time has fallen on the shoulders of higher learning institutes. Before any teaching staff undertakes the possibilities offered by teacher collaboration, the staff must first be brought up-to-speed, about how highly productive teams operate.

The transition for a teacher to move from the factory model of instruction to a collaborative culture is a complex one and the demand placed on the teacher can be cumbersome. The teacher must be prepared to implement a diverse range of skills and in the process of developing these attributes they need as much practical experience and support as possible.

The data collected by this research should help school districts and institutions of teacher preparation to collaborate and find consensus on meaningful strategies to help prepare teachers to work with others to improve student achievement.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The research was guided by three questions: (a) To what extent did the participant find help from teacher collaboration, using time during the school day? (b) What type of collaborative activities did the participant experience that helped him prepare for teaching in the classroom? (c) What steps or events made a difference in the success the participant had improving student achievement?

Results

The extent participants found help from teacher collaboration, using time during the school day was determined by using the mean scores based on a Likert type scale. The mean scores suggest that teachers valued collaboration time built into the school day. Teachers given the opportunity to collaborate during the school day, used this time productively to discuss student achievement. (see Table1)

The type of collaborative activities the participants experience that helped them prepare for teaching in the classroom was determined by listing the responses asking for Comments, Concerns and Solutions. Each response from the teachers was compiled and bulleted for discussion. In the comments section, most teachers viewed collaboration as a positive step in their professional development. In the concerns section, most teachers expressed a desire to meet more often than time and schedule currently allow. The solutions offered by the teachers included more directions from the administration as to

what they should accomplish during this time, and other ideas for which groups would benefit from collaboration. (see Table 2)

The steps or events that made a difference in the success the participants had improving student achievement was determined by using a section of the survey titled: Where do we go from here? This section asked the respondents to give their views on the following five questions:

1. Where do we go from here?
2. What steps/activities must be initiated to create this condition in your school?
3. Who will be responsible for initiating and/or sustaining these steps or activities?
4. What is a realistic timeline for each phase of the activity?
5. What will you use to assess the effectiveness of your initiative?

Analysis of Data

Table 1

Survey question answers that asked teachers questions in relationship to their department and indicated the level to which the statement is descriptive of their team.

Question	% of Response
1. Each member of our team is clear on the intended outcomes of the goals set by the curriculum coordinator.	7.9

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 2. The curriculum objectives are aligned to the MAP goals. | 8.8 |
| 3. There is prerequisite knowledge for the intended outcomes to be mastered. | 8.5 |
| 4. We have identified strategies and created instruments to access students. | 8.2 |
| 5. We have agreed on how to sequence our course objectives for students to achieve the intended outcomes. | 7.8 |
| 6. We have identified the proficiency level we want the students to achieve. | 7.8 |
| 7. We have identified content material that can be eliminated. | 7.3 |
| 8. We have set SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, research orientated, time bound) goals regarding student achievement. | 7.3 |
| 9. We are providing documentation to show how the collaboration is being conducted. | 7.8 |
| 10. We have identified department goals to guide us in working together. | 6.9 |

Note. The scores were based on survey results on a Likert type scale from (this is true of our team) 10 to (this is not true of our team) 1.

Table 2

Survey responses from three open-ended questions asking for comments, concerns and suggestions.

Comments

- My department has done a great job sticking to collaboration and taking it personally.
- Jesse Allen would be a great curriculum coordinator.
- I think collaboration time is great, I learned a lot about what others are doing.
- We have discussed current curriculum issues and shared many activities to improve learning. We have worked together to address materials issues and storage issues.
- Collaboration time is extremely helpful for our department.
- I feel that the special services department is floundering. It seems to me that everyone is just doing their own thing.
- Many of these questions regard areas that need ongoing scrutiny. We should not ever feel as if we have done enough. It is an ongoing process to look at the needs of students and how to best meet those needs and assess progress.
- Never knew what to do during this time.
- It would be good to keep the collaboration period.

- This questionnaire is directed more towards core subject teams than elective classes.
- Survey questions are difficult to respond to.
- Being the only art teacher at the middle school I don't have other teacher to strategies discuss art with, I do attempt to use the items above.
- I think collaboration time is great, I learned a lot about what others are doing.
- We have discussed current curriculum issues and shared many activities to improve learning. We have worked together to address materials issues and storage issues.
- Collaboration time is extremely helpful for our department.
- I feel that the special services department is floundering. It seems to me that everyone is just doing their own thing.
- Many of these questions regard areas that need ongoing scrutiny. We should not ever feel as if we have done enough. It is an ongoing process to look at the needs of students and how to best meet those needs and assess progress.
- Never knew what to do during this time.
- It would be good to keep the collaboration period.
- This questionnaire is directed more towards core subject teams than elective classes.
- Survey questions are difficult to respond to.
- Being the only art teacher at the middle school I don't have other teacher to discuss art strategies with, I do attempt to use the items above.

Concerns

- We meet for extra time every other week, so sometimes the meetings are long. We do get lots of things done, though. We are a very thorough and serious team. We take curriculum and objectives seriously. All of the 10's on my questionnaire are from lots of hard-working meetings.
- Meeting as a 6-8 grade team is good, but we really need to meet as a 4-7 grade team, and as a 8-10 grade team, also, regularly, especially in regard to revising curriculum.
- Other than school collaboration time, it is very difficult to meet because of the coaching commitments.
- Little and meaningless communication
- Procedures done behind teacher's backs.
- Each teacher unaware of what the other is doing.
- Communication of needs from the administration.
- Students are being treated unfairly.
- That time used is not productive nor appropriate.
- Not meeting with other subjects or the same grade level.
- The elective classes not viewed as playing an important role in curriculum.
- Due to minimal opportunities for collaboration, I'm unsure how some of these questions are applicable.

Solutions

- I think we could have a list of goals to accomplish each meeting (we always do) and stick to this list so as to be more efficient in meetings. I could try to communicate more regularly. Also, I need to document our meetings better so that I could pass minutes to elementary and high school people.
- Department head with specific job description.
- Clear-cut guidelines
- Staffing at convenient times where all teachers and administrators must attend.
- Have specific goals for collaboration time.
- Have a notebook to jot down notes as ideas come to you during the day of ways to improve instruction. Keep documentation of success of strategies, various assessments, delivery of instruction, ect.
- Realize main goal and focus for students.
- Have collaboration time with subject level and also grade level.
- Practical arts and fine arts be included in the core subject collaboration time.
- Allow for additional collaboration time.
- It would be nice if a couple times a year I could meet with the art instructors across the district to discuss these things and curriculum.

- The solution would be to rotate grade level collaboration into the cycle. The communication Arts Department would like to work more closely with the social studies department at each grade level.

Table 3

Survey participants were asked “Where do we go from here?” They were given the following statement: The challenge confronting a school that has engaged in the collective consideration of a topic is answering the question, “So what?” What, if anything, are we prepared to do differently? Reflect on our discussion of a professional learning community, then answer the following questions presented below.

1. Describe one or more aspects of a professional learning community that you would like to see in place in your school.

- Less class disruptions.
 - Grade level teams that meet regularly.
 - One day each week where sport teams do not have after school practice so other organizations can meet.
 - Strategies for at-risk students, good support structure.
 - Commons discipline philosophy for school as a limit. Example: Love and Logic.
- Increase parent involvement helping parents to feel a needed part in the educational process.

- Establish strong, yet fair, accountability.
 - Grade level teachers meetings to discuss concerns with specific students and coming up with ways to help them.
 - Continuous collaboration and feedback among teachers in all subject areas and administration holding teachers accountable for collaboration and proof of mastery of goals set at the beginning of the year.
 - On site building management committees.
-

2. What steps/activities must be initiated to create this condition in your school?

- Could we classify this as "at-risk" and meet after school one day per week or before school (7:30 a.m.) one day per week.
- Each teacher could write down missing assignments and update at the end of the day. Each class would have a set of textbooks students would need to complete assignments.
- Time made for teachers to get together.
- Time scheduled on the school calendar for collaboration with all subject areas.
- Establish committees
- Set-up time for the committees to meet.
- Allow committees opportunities to affect school policies and programs.
- Themes for projects
- Times for projects
- We need to set up a planning committee.

3. Who will be responsible for initiating and/or sustaining these steps or activities?

- Teachers at each level.
- Coaches of sport teams.
- Organized committees.
- Each teacher.
- Loss of Privilege (LOP) teachers.
- Teachers/administrators.
- Administration and staff.
- The administration and planning committee

4. What is a realistic timeline for each phase of the activity?

- It depends on the type of solutions at the end of each step, a projected date for completion of the next step can be determined.
- LOP time everyday, each grading period (I think it needs to be every three weeks)
- Next fall.
- Should begin the first quarter of school and meet every quarter with a year-end evaluation.
- Begin at beginning of the next school year. Evaluate progress at semester.
- We should have one workshop per quarter.

5. What will you use to assess the effectiveness of your initiative?

- Student progress.
- Number of students participating in extracurricular other than sports.
- Assessments should be developed as the plan is developed.
- Action plans should be approved by staff as a whole.
- See if students who have F's can get out of LOP earlier.
- Student performance improvement in those specific students.
- Scores on MAP tests and student performance.
- Positive changes in school program policies.
- I will use classroom implementation of strategies to assess the effectiveness of your implementation.
- Student surveys to determine what students got out of the project.

Deductive Conclusions

There were 25 Laura Speed Elliott Middle School staff members that took part in this survey. The size of the district is approximately 1,500 students in grades K-12. The district is located in a rural setting. After analyzing the data it was apparent that the staff felt there was a need for collaboration built into the school's schedule. The staff had many questions about implementing a collaboration program. The staff also had the opportunity to express their opinions about collaboration and how it would affect their program.

There was strong evidence that the traditional routine of collaboration and professional development are not meeting the needs of the classroom teacher.

Universities and other teacher preparation programs do not meet the needs of the teachers when it comes to the importance of collaborating with their colleagues. The teachers had many questions regarding how the program would be implemented and evaluated.

Summary

Making changes will not be easy. Traditional scheduling in schools is packed with programs that are important to students and staff. In order to implement a collaboration program, during the school day, will require a look at the educational program to see if there are areas that need to be modified or dropped. Re-shuffling the school day will require communicating with all stakeholders. They will need to be brought "on-board" for this change to be successful.

It is very important that teachers take on a larger role in the school and what is happening in their classrooms. This can be accomplished if they are given time during the school day to discuss curriculum, techniques, budget and student achievement. Asking them to do this before or after school, or during the summer months, will make a difficult change next to impossible.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This preliminary study was based on 25 participants who were or are currently serving as teachers in the Boonville R-I Public School System. The participants had received their teacher training from various institutions throughout the state, and one teacher received his/her training in Iowa. The participants' responses to collaborative experiences in the past were basically of the before or after school variety. Some had collaborated during the summer months when students were not in session. They received a stipend for the time they collaborated. Each teacher brought his/her own experiences and thoughts to the survey as indicated by the responses. Furthermore, some responses were thrown out of the study due to many participants marking (NA) not applicable. Some of the information obtained from the survey was not used due to the fact that it will be used to focus on a more in-depth study of collaboration and student achievement in the future and did not pertain to this study.

Further studies need to concentrate on teachers who have experience collaboration during their training and in an actual school setting. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) could also help the process of introducing collaboration time to all Missouri schools by including this during the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) reviews. The State Legislature could also help this process through the funding stream to Missouri K-12 Public Schools.

The study does stimulate interest to search deeper into different programs that provide teachers collaboration time during the school day. To implement the program at

LSE Middle School, no additional staff was hired and the school day was not lengthened. Working with the resources available at the time, implementation of collaboration time during the school day was difficult. This model fit this particular school and might not work for other similar schools. Using the resource of time and changing the structure of the school day allowed this school to implement the program with no additional cost to the Boonville R-I Public School system.

The study coincides with numerous studies concerning collaboration time for classroom teachers. Collaboration enables teachers to test their ideas about teaching and expand their level of expertise by allowing them to hear the ideas of others (Wildman & Niles, 1987).

Implication for Effective Schools

Teachers need time to do the many tasks required of them. On top of everything else they do, they are asked to take part in the improvement process. This cannot be done without constant communication with their peers. Establishing collaboration time, during the school day is possibly the best way to ensure we can sustain school improvement initiatives.

Recommendations

The practice of building collaboration time into the regular school day is something any school can do without additional staff or adding time to the school day. The opportunity for teachers to be able to meet and discuss best practices and methods will ensure that school improvement initiatives will survive and thrive. The idea that a teacher closes the door and teaches in a solitary setting should be one that is discarded. In

order to improve instruction and raise student achievement, collaboration time offers the possibilities to meet each of these worthy goals.

Summary

In order for student achievement to improve, schools must look at innovative methods to bring their staffs along in this process. With current funding streams staying stagnant or even drying up, districts must look for professional development opportunities with the resources they control. Time and the structure of the school day is one area that schools must be willing to look at for possible solutions to the achievement and funding challenges they currently face.

Re-structuring the school day to allow time for teacher collaboration is the method chosen by the school in this study. By re-working the school day, this school was able to implement collaboration for teachers during the school day. The process involved talking to staff and students, meeting with parents, presenting this concept to the superintendent and school board. Once the stakeholders were informed of the concept and practical problems were addressed, implementation was completed and the program started.

By adding collaboration time for teachers, during the school day, student achievement did improve. The number of students, qualifying for the Honor Roll and Principal's Honor Roll, has gone up. Students who have qualified for application into the National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) has also increased. With the addition of teacher collaboration time to the schedule, teachers have been able to discuss instructional techniques that have improved instruction and student achievement.

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2002-2003
SCHOOL YEAR

DEPARTMENT _____
CURRICULUM COORDINATOR _____
NAME _____

Critical Questions for Department Consideration

Consider the following questions in relationship to your department and indicate the level to which the statement is descriptive of your team:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

This is not true
of our team

This is true of
some but not
all

Uncertain

This is true
for most but
not all

This is
true of
our team

1. _____ Each member of our team is clear on the intended outcomes of the goals set by the curriculum coordinator.
2. _____ The curriculum objectives are aligned to the MAP goals.
3. _____ There is prerequisite knowledge for the intended outcomes to be mastered.
4. _____ We have identified strategies and created instruments to assess students.
5. _____ We have agreed on how to sequence our course objectives for students to achieve the intended outcomes.
6. _____ We have identified the proficiency level we want the students to achieve.
7. _____ We have identified content material that can be eliminated.

8._____ We have set SMART (specific,measurable,attainable,research orientated, timebound) goals regarding student achievement.

9._____ We are providing documentation to show how the collaboration is being conducted.

10._____ We have identified department goals to guide us in working together.

Comments:

Concerns:

Solutions: