

Staff Development Models

by Barbara Bray

CUE Newsletter – November/December 2000 Issue – Volume 22 – Number 6

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead

Staff development comes in many forms, but what works is when a team of people really believe in making something work and fight for it. If you are part of the curriculum or technology team at your school or district, you probably find yourself in the role of advocate for quality staff development. Every situation is different, but through this column, I thought it would be helpful for you to read about different models that exemplify high quality staff development. Each of the following contributors are happy to share with you what has been working for them.

Community-Based Learning

Jeff Foote (jfoote@sbceo.org) science teacher at Kermit Mckenzie Jr. High, Guadalupe, California, co-director of the Central Coast Science Project, Youth Technology Corps Coordinator, and Environmental Education Program Director for the Dunes Center shared that “partnerships and organizations outside of schools and districts often help us think beyond the boundaries of the classroom.” In Guadalupe, a variety of projects came up with similar ideas of staff development and community-based learning that brings together different generations, school, and family.

The Guadalupe Dunes Education Center, Central Coast Science Project (CCSP), the RAIN Network, and the Guadalupe Union School District are sharing ideas, funds, and people to build community learning resources. The work ranges from student "jr. docents" leading home-bound seniors on nature walks in the dune lakes to a Youth Technology Corps mapping the community landmarks into a sophisticated GIS. The 5th –8th grade students will be assisted by high school mentors and parents. The CCSP out of Cal Poly has integrated three different professional development initiatives-Science Leadership, Technology, and English Language Development in Content areas- and will use the school garden-based learning programs to extend teacher learning

out into the Dunes Center environmental education programs.

(<http://www.sbceo.k12.ca.us/~kmgquad>)

Job-Embedded Staff Development

Steve Kay (skay@scu.k12.ca.us), principal of Scott Lane Elementary School in Santa Clara, California, provides a job-embedded approach with all teachers on staff. For the past 3 years, the literacy coordinator worked as a "just in time" staff developer in the 1000 Days to Success program (K-2 students 'learn to read' and 3-5 students 'read to learn'). "We found nothing as powerful in facilitating change in instructional practice as 'job embedded learning' with a 'just in time' coach/mentor." This year, two technology-using teachers with curriculum expertise are sharing a classroom position half of the time. Both of these teachers receive an additional 30% time that is devoted to technology and curriculum on-site support for the teachers. With around thirty certificated staff, this means that a classroom teacher may have just-in-time support for technology and/or curriculum issues right when they need it.

The Core Values program at Oakland Unified School District, mentioned in the September CUE newsletter, has a successful coaching model in place. Technology and curriculum coaches work with 5th through 8th grade teachers in their classrooms assisting them with the design and implementation of student projects for the Virtual Museum

(http://webtest.ousd.k12.ca.us/cvf/core_values/projects/index_vm.html). The next step was to provide on-line ongoing support. At a summer institute on Electronic Collaboration, teachers developed classroom-to-classroom, teacher-to-teacher, and e-pal projects (http://webtest.ousd.k12.ca.us/cvf/core_values/calendar/agenda_vm_august.html). Coaching is the ultimate job-embedded staff development model.

Joni Turville (turville@oanet.com) and Barb Scott (scottb@spschools.org). of Ronald Harvey Elementary school in St. Albert, Alberta Canada, a suburb of Edmonton, are the creators of a school-based mentoring program. The staff determines their own interests and needs in using technology and then plans for regular professional development activities in their own school, provided by their own teachers who have expertise in different areas. Each day one of the school-based mentors has one period to work with a teacher and his/her class to discuss the kinds

of themes being explored and how technology might be used to enhance their studies. The mentor teaches lessons ranging from multimedia production to web page creation as the teacher works along with the students to learn the necessary technology skills within their own curriculum.

This collaborative model has allowed the staff to increase their skill level and confidence very quickly and has allowed some very powerful project-based learning to occur. This mentoring project was recently awarded a Network of Innovative Schools award from Industry Canada. Their school also has several award-winning online projects such as the VIPER Club – an Internet reading project. (<http://www.pschoools.st-albert.ab.ca/schools/rhem/>).

Using Standards to Drive Staff Development

Jan Pearson, (janpearson@earthlink.net) third grade teacher at Oakley Elementary in Oakley, California and Teacher of the Year in Oakley Union Elementary Schools shared how through effective grade-level team planning and using standards and benchmarks to drive the curriculum increased third grade students' math scores.

The five third grade teachers looked at STAR test results in math and found many areas below grade level. Then they looked at the standards and benchmarks that they needed to reach and at the timeline to address the benchmarks before the test. What they found was that many of the lesser strands were not taught until the end of year so students did not have familiarity with geometry, algebra, probability, logic, and measurement at the test date. They also found that teaching multiplication in midyear was not effective. They came up with two new strategies to teach math: (1) begin the year with multiplication and (2) have each teacher focus on one of the strands as an expert. Each of five teachers teaches one of those strands – students from each class visit all of the teachers through a rotation schedule on Fridays. Each teacher, as an expert in their area, plans a series of six lessons, but teaches only her strand five times. In just one year, math scores increased from the 40th percentile to the 63rd percentile.

Planning and working as a team to target areas that need work is an approach all of us need to look at. Using this model along with choosing an area of the curriculum that lends itself to

smaller areas of interest could well be a wise approach to staff development. None of this could have happened without sufficient time to plan and collaborate. The teachers were not too sure about starting with standards, but now it is paying off. They plan to look at other curriculum areas and integrating technology to tackle next.

Scott Smith (scott@visalia.k12.ca.us) shared successful summer technology festivals at Fresno Pacific University. The term “festival” conveys a more playful tone during the event where participants assume the role of students and play out their own WebQuest. Rather than putting them in the role of a curriculum inventor, they taste what an exemplary standards-based technology-rich unit looks and feels like. They experience the pedagogy involved in such a lesson and explore the foundations behind these teaching strategies. At the close of the festival, many teachers have commented that they "get it." In the end, they have found that the teachers are more likely to adapt this unit in their own fall classroom because, from experience, they believe it will work. Feel free to explore the themed festivals titled "Spin It!" and "Go for the Gold" (<http://gradmath.fresno.edu/festival/>)

Letting Go

Cheryl Vitali, (cvitali@telis.org) District Technology Mentor and Special Education teacher at Alta Elementary in Reedley, California explained why her staff development program is more like a flying formation of geese than a stampede of buffalo. A Fall CUE session by Sara Armstrong called *Weaving the Goosenet* had a profound influence on Cheryl who identified with the technology leader who blazed the way like a buffalo. Yet buffalo blindly follow a leader, will easily stampede, and even jump to their death if improperly led. Geese, on the other hand, utilize teamwork, and will spell each other and take turns in leading the flock on their annual migration. Older wiser birds help train a younger strong one so they work together. Cheryl's job as district mentor led to a major drive to help build the framework for growth that was a team effort. Yet, leadership opportunities for different team members came and went where she was hoping they would be transformed into this elusive breed of teachers or gooselos. Watching her efforts work for some and not work for others was difficult. What that meant was letting go, pulling back in the formation, and letting others take the lead.

The fruits of her labor are starting to show some geoselos spreading their wings. Cheryl has more time and energy to develop projects for her students and sees other technology projects going on around the school. She saw one of the technology mentors excited about using the portable computers with struggling students and second language learners. Another had just given a report to the staff about technology use at Alta. This usually was Cheryl's job. A first grade teacher showed the impressive envelopes she had made from building a database that personalized her report cards. Now Cheryl realizes the formation of geoseloes is working. (<http://cyberfair.gsn.org/altakcusd>). This information is from The Catalyst, Spring 1999 article "Confessions of a Tech Mentor." Cheryl spends a lot of her energy toward mentoring other teachers online. Check out her article in Classroom Connect's magazine where she was honored as *Internet Educator of the Year*.

Pulling It All Together

In just pulling these projects in this column together, I believe that Margaret Mead was probably talking about teachers and staff developers like the ones mentioned here. Some of the staff development models you use may include one or more of the following:

- Community-based learning
- Time and resources available so teachers can help each other on-site and on-line
- An advocate, mentor, or coach who provides on-site and on-line support
- A collaborative approach to planning and implementation
- A standards and curriculum-based driven program
- Areas of expertise strategy
- A mentor program that builds capacity by letting others take the lead

Other characteristics of quality professional development are available at the National Staff Development Council website: <http://www.nsd.org>

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