The Next Generation of Professional Learning: *Combining Teacher Inquiry and Professional Learning Communities*

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Agenda

- What is inquiry?
- What does it look like?
- What is the relationship between PLCs and inquiry?
- How can PLCs function to support inquiry?

What is inquiry?

Action Research/ Teacher Research/ Teacher Inquiry/ Practitioner Inquiry/ Classroom Research/Self-Study

Systematic, intentional study by educators of their own practice
(Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993)

What Inquiry is Not

Experimental

What Inquiry Is

Naturalistic

Five Components of the Inquiry Cycle

1. Wondering (Question) Development
2. Data Collection
3. Data Analysis
4. Synthesis/Sharing
5. Action

Wonderings: Questions of Practice

Data Collection

Capturing the action, learning, and thinking that is occurring in the classroom and/or the school.

Numerous strategies for collecting data

Data Collection Strategies

- Student Work and other Documents/Artifacts
- Observations/Field Notes/Anecdotal Notes
- Standardized Test Scores/Grades/Progress Monitoring Tools
- Interviews/Focus Groups
- Digital Pictures/Video
- Reflective Journals/Weblogs
- Surveys
- Feedback from Colleagues
- Literature (Academic Research)

Data Analysis

Creating a story of your learning as an inquirer based on a close and careful examination of your data

Formative Data Analysis. . .

. . . Summative Data Analysis

Synthesis/Sharing

Teachers collaborating with one another to define and refine their investigations into practice as well as communicate the results of their work with other professionals.

Action

Making informed change and adjustments to teaching practice to improve learning conditions within a classroom, a school, and/or an entire district.

The Inquiry-Oriented Professional Learning Community (PLC)

A group of professionals who meet on a regular basis to learn from practice through structured dialogue and engagement in continuous cycles through the process of inquiry

Structures for Inquiry-Oriented PLCs

- Structure 1 - One collaborative inquiry around shared question
- Structure 2 - One shared topic with numerous inquiries related to the shared topic
- Structure 3 - All inquirers are independent but what binds them together is that they are all engaging in the process of inquiry

5 Critical Junctures

- Introduction to inquiry process
- Locating a wondering
- Developing a plan for research
- Analyzing data
- Sharing work with others

The Protocol

- A script or series of timed steps for how a conversation among teachers on a chosen topic will develop

Numerous protocols are available from School Reform Initiative

http://www.schoolreforminitiative.org/

Introduction to Inquiry Process

- Why Critical?
- How To:
  - Protocol: Block Party
  - Inquiry shared by Teachers
    - Speakers
    - Examples
    - DVD Clips
  - Reading and Discussion (Save the Last Word For Me)

Locating a Wondering: Why Critical?

"Rarely does any teacher eloquently state his or her wondering immediately. It takes time, brainstorming, and actually 'playing' with the question. . . By playing with the wording of a wondering, teachers often fine-tune and discover more detail about the subject they are really passionate about understanding."

- Dana & Yendol-Hoppey (2014)

Two Step Process

1. Zooming Out – *Considering possibilities for wonderings that might be posed*
2. Zooming In – *Choosing from the possibilities and fine-tuning the focus*

Zooming Out

8 Passions: Catalysts for Wondering Development

- The Child
- Curriculum
- Content Knowledge
- Teaching Strategies/Techniques
- Beliefs about Practice
- Personal/Professional Identity
- Social Justice
- Context

How To (Zooming Out):

- Passions Profile Protocol

How To (Zooming In):

- Great Wondering Brainstorm
- Fine-Tuning a Question Feedback Protocol

Developing Research Plan: Why Critical?

"An elderly man had lived his entire life in the same small town. Approaching his sixtieth birthday, he decided to venture out of his small town to explore the ways people lived in other parts of the world. Excited by the prospect of his journey, he filled his car up with gas, and began driving. He had some general notions of where he might head, but did not bother to chart a course for his travels or bring a road map. Before long, he found himself wandering aimlessly from road to road, town to town, and he had lost sight of why he began this trip in the first place. He returned to the comfort of his home without the enrichment or insights that travel can bring."

The Journey Metaphor

Inquiry Planning – Charting a map for your inquiry journey

The Map: The Inquiry Brief

Definition: A one-two page outline for your inquiry.

What does an inquiry brief look like?

What does an inquiry brief include?

How To

Inquiry Brief Protocol

Analyzing Data: Why Critical

The Teacher Inquirer's Anxiety

I've collected all of this "stuff" – Now what do I do with it????"

The Data Analysis Protocol

Pages 64-72

The PLC Book

"Reader's Theater"

Sharing: Why Critical

- Helps Teacher Inquirer Clarify His/Her Thinking
- Helps Colleagues Improve Their Practice

How To

- Summary Write-Ups
- Powerpoint Presentations
- Posters
- Weblogs
- Journal Articles/Publications
- Conferencing

Where To Share: Publications

- *Educational Action Research*
- *Action Research*
- *Networks: An Online Journal for Teacher Research*
- *Journal of Practitioner Research* **NEW!**
- Create Your Own Publication!

Where To Share: Presentations

- Organized Inquiry/Action Research Conferences
- American Educational Research Association (Teacher Researcher SIG)
- Sharing Sessions at School Level (Special Share Times or Use Faculty/Grade Level Meetings)
- Create Your Own Conference!

What's Needed?

(What policies must be in place to successfully enact a support structure for inquiry-oriented PLCs?)

- Incentive To Participate
- Time To Work

Resources