

Key Learnings from the Course

Key Messages and Big Ideas	Reasons Why
<p>1. <i>Dialogue is important and needed in schools.</i></p>	<p>In the words of Gregory & Kuzmich, “dialogue matters.” Dialogue should be a discussion, an exchange, an ongoing conversation going back and forth. Teachers need dialogue in order to reflect and improve their practice. Fullan (quoted in Gregory & Kuzmich) suggests that information only becomes knowledge through dialogue and meaning making. In this course I have seen how important the role dialogue plays in all areas of teacher learning. Dialogue comes from leadership as leaders of learning whether it is through modeling, building trust, or specific work with faculty. Glickman’s tasks of supervision for leaders are all based on dialogue. The goal of protocols, <i>Teacher Teams</i> strategies, and the designs in <i>Powerful Designs of Learning</i> is to create structures for dialogue. Walkthroughs and Direct Assistance with faculty begin and end with dialogue. Many schools may not have a culture of dialogue, but we have the tools to provide opportunity for discussion, inquiry, learning, and reflection.</p>
<p>2. <i>Schools must be deliberate in creating and sustaining a growth-oriented culture.</i></p>	<p>As we want our students to grow, we must expect that of ourselves. Just as we desire our classrooms to be a growth-oriented cultures, we must demand that of our schools. Creating a growth-oriented climate, sharing knowledge and skills, building resilience, and determining priorities is no easy feat. (Gregory & Kuzmich, xxii). Moreover, more time should be spent on sustaining change than implementing it. There needs to be deliberate and conscious planning to create highly effective teams that sustain</p>

	<p>themselves in the process of continual renewal and accountability. Schools must develop a supportive environment, as well as create opportunities and provide time for inquiry, collaboration, and reflection.</p>
<p>3. <i>Schools need to use school improvement as a context for professional learning.</i></p>	<p>Significant change will occur when people alter their attitudes, aspirations, and behaviors, as well as knowledge or skills (KASAB). School improvement provides a context for that change. I have found that focusing on the questions for clarifying the purpose of a professional learning community will help focus on improvement for classrooms, teaching practice, and schools—what is it we want students to learn? how will we know when each student has achieved the learning? how will we respond when a student is not learning? These questions bring us to the real end in mind, student success.</p>
<p>4. <i>Leadership is important for establishing a growth-oriented culture.</i></p>	<p>School cultures need the support of effective leadership. As the role of principle/leaders has evolved into instructional leader or leader of learning, leaders need to be self-aware, engaged and active. The leader needs to see the school as a system in need of continual growth and evolution. In order to create that culture, leaders need to build relational trust with respect, competence and a communication of a strong vision of learning.</p>
<p>5. <i>There is a variety of resources of great quality for creating and sustaining a learning community.</i></p>	<p>Most of my own professional learning has been on my own. I enjoy learning as well as reflecting and improving my own practice, but I missed dialogue—sharing and learning from others. In a leadership position at a previous school, I tried to create opportunities of dialogue but was taken aback from resistance and some unwillingness to grow and work with others, especially by senior faculty members. Unfortunately, I felt ill equipped</p>

	with a lack of vocabulary, context and tools to press on. With resources from Learning Forward, Solution-Tree, ASCD, Danielson, EAD 824 resources, I feel more confident in my objectives as well my ability to move a school culture to look forward.
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Shifts in Thinking, Beliefs and/or Values

Shifts	Reasons Why
<p><i>I now think a culture professional learning instead of professional development can be created in schools.</i></p>	<p>Having worked in a school for a brief period of time with a collaborative environment, I have seen firsthand the benefits of that culture. I have, unfortunately, been frustrated with more traditional professional development in schools including my current employment. The shift to professional learning is ongoing and puts the onus on the learner. Professional learning is based on the real world of teaching and learning and improves teacher practice by collecting, analyzing, presenting and reflecting on the real data of student work and teacher practice. The resources and approach of this course have allowed me to believe that a switch to professional learning can occur in schools.</p>
<p><i>I used to think principles could be effective as a manager, but I now think that they need to see themselves as “leaders for learning.”</i></p>	<p>Looking back on my own career, I have wanted to work for leaders more connected to the classroom and mission of the school. I did, however, believe that leaders could be good managers keeping the system of the school running smoothly. Yet, as education has evolved, schools and teachers are asked to do more and are being held accountable with higher stakes. Leaders need to create a shared vision of collective responsibility for student learning. In order to lead that culture, they need to be learning leaders. The process of individual and institutional change and growth can be messy and difficult at times, but if leaders focus on the end in mind of student learning and build</p>

	relationships of trust in school, the culture of the school can continue to evolve with positive results of teacher and student achievement.
<i>I now believe protocols can be effective tools for faculty learning.</i>	Reading over protocols and going through some of this in this course, my first reaction was reticence. I now see that the structure of protocols and strategies engage diverse or common groups as well as provide safe, nonthreatening environments for collaboration and inquiry. Even using SBI can be very effective tool of direct assistance because it provides concrete data for discussion and inquiry.

Application of One of Glickman's Tasks

<i>Glickman's Task</i>
<p>This is actually a difficult choice for me. I see the benefits and have interest in all five of Glickman's tasks and see how they are all related and important. If I had to prioritize, I would lean toward Professional Development because of my work on Assignments Three and Four. In order to transform from an "egg crate" culture of isolation and autonomy to a collaborative learning community, schools the shift their paradigm and vocabulary from professional development to professional learning so that teachers can expand their own knowledge about teaching and learning. In my proposal for this course, I want to make small steps to move from supportive practice to developmental practice, but focus on Group Work (creating a CFG group) and Direct Assistance with an improved mentoring program.</p>

New Questions

<i>New Questions to Ponder or Address (soon or some day)</i>
1. Are there better methods to be more systematic in handling resistance or making teachers more accountable?
2. What is the level of joint work that is realistic and developing an interdependent culture?
3. I have wanted to tie teacher evaluation into growth and learning using Danielson's Frameworks. Would this be a logical next step after a creation of a PLC/CFG and expansion of a mentoring program?
4. With all of my experience in private schools, I am not used to using data guiding professional inquiry, and I would like to know of some examples and experience of using data with different types of student work.

Summary

Summary of Learning

I've enjoyed this course because it's reinforced many ideas of professional growth for teachers and schools. Moreover, I feel I am taking away many tools to meet those objectives. It is important that we as practitioners deepen our own knowledge of teaching, continue to improve our practice, take joint responsibility for our students, and create a learning community that increases student achievement. Learning communities will reduce isolation and increase commitment to the school's mission and vision as well as lead to continued growth and development.