

The Role of Professional Development in SAGE Schools

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Elements of High Quality Professional Development

- Reformed format
- Ongoing
- Collective participation
- Content focused
- Active learning
- Coherent program
 - Garet et al, 2000

PD in Class Size Reduction

- The important question may not be what smaller classes should look like, but why they so often look just like larger classes. While reduced class size is a structural condition that can create possible interactions to support student growth, ways in which teachers can accomplish this are not intuitive. To make substantial changes in teacher practice, teachers must have opportunities to learn about & develop these practices in high quality professional development & in regular & sustained dialogue with colleagues. (Evertson, 2000)

PD and CSR as resources

- Professional development & class size reduction can be seen as resources that must be activated in local settings.
 - How do they come together in the context of SAGE implementation in specific schools?

PD within SAGE legislation

- Transition programs for newly hired employees
- Planning/collaboration time
- Submission & review of teacher & administrator PD plans that focus on improvement of performance

Lack of attention to SAGE-specific content or strategies

- Few knew that SAGE had a PD component
- Few remembered SAGE PD
 - I think that there are a lot of things that the district could have done when SAGE was first put into the building to prepare teachers. It sounds funny-how to handle 15 kids instead of 30. But if you're teaching a classroom of 15 kids the same way you would have taught a classroom of 30, what's the point of 15 kids? We weren't given any inservicing. We weren't given anything to build on.
 - Ms. Stratton, Learning Coordinator, Gallows Elementary

SAGE orientation

- Some staff development on the SAGE program. What are its goals, what is its whole theory? So that there would be an awareness of the advantages we should expect by being a part of this program. Some staff development on, given a smaller class, what is it we expect you to be doing because you have fewer students? You have fewer numbers and the expectation is that you will have more communication with parents now. . . I don't know that any of that happened but it would make sense to me that that might be something that would be both beneficial to the program and to the teachers. . . .Professional develop has really been not because of SAGE but because of other initiatives and making sure that we are ready for those.
 - Paula Walworth, principal Earhart Elementary

Changes in instructional strategy

- Let's find out how to do small group instruction. Let's find out how we can teach to kids and not have chaos in the classroom. Let's find out how we can do learning centers better. How can we teach kids to be independent learners?"
 - Ms. Stratton, Learning Coordinator, Gallows

Issues with team teaching

- I want to set high expectations, when there are two teachers in the room, this is what there should be most of; this is what there should be least of. You can't say that there won't be any time when you are going to have 1 to 24, certainly there's going to be that time and sometimes that is good for the other teacher to make a phone call or take care of an individual child. But most of the time there should be 1 to 12 ratio or 2 to 25. . . *I don't want you to be the 23rd child in the room, you're just sitting in back and enjoying the teachers lesson.* There are other roles you can play.
 - Mary Durst, principal, Montford Elementary

Focus on “best practices”

- I think any kind of staff development that is designed to improve teaching, to make it more best practice is going to be valuable staff development, whether it's geared toward SAGE or geared toward a larger classroom. I don't think that there should be money spent just for staff development for SAGE schools. I think they need to provide it for *all* schools.
 - Mrs. Rich, Gr 2/3 teacher, Earhart Elementary

Weak, eclectic - PD as a buffet

- Wellstone Blvd approach: Mandatory DI training, optional CHAMPS management training on Saturdays, math, 6 traits, AR
 - So there's ongoing staff development. I'm just saying that spark, that is just inside some teachers, just gifted, they're born that way, and it isn't staff development. And the reality is that not all teachers have that spark. They can do a decent job, get a satisfactory rating, the reality is that you aren't going to get a full staff—45 people—with sparks.
 - Gary Byrd, principal, Wellstone Blvd.

Focused approaches

- Goal oriented
- Aligned with instructional plans
- Evidence driven

School based PD design

- We look at data and we look at where the children are struggling, and then we look at what's happening in the classroom. For instance, our children have consistently not done well with writing. In the district it takes a 3 to be proficient our children get like 2.5. . . .We looked at writing and we talked about professional development for teachers as well as for the parents and making sure that we provided an opportunity for students to understand exactly what they needed to do in order to write a proficient paper.

- Mrs. Collier, principal, Calloway Academy

Professional collaboration

- She made it possible for us to have release time to do team planning and she made it possible for us to have additional release time for assessment. She made it possible for us to get staff development, trying to make staff development opportunities really pertinent to what was going on in the school instead of just filling up those days. . . We broke into smaller groups and then got back together and problem solved and she would get people from downtown that would come out to do different workshops on best practices. She was good at getting us release time to do workshops outside the building if we needed.

- Mrs. Rich, Gr 2/3 teacher, Earhart Elementary

District focus on PD - Bellamy

- Unifying goals and instructional approaches
- Elementary & middle schools 9 half days of inservice
- “laser-like focus” on literacy and math
- Balanced literacy & complementary assessment system
- Principal as instructional leader

PD at McMahon

- Lack of continuity in leadership
- Principal didn't see self as instructional leader
- PD & fuzzy topped pens

Recommendations

- *SAGE* specific PD needed to support a shift to small group or team teaching
- Linking content based and small group content
- Recognize that *SAGE* is a contingent addition to existing systems