

Promising Practices and Implementation Tools–Final Template

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District(s) Where Implemented: Foxborough Public Schools

Lever Addressed and Title of Promising Practice: Professional Development

5. How This Practice Reflects District’s Mission and Core Values:

Professional Development is a core value in Foxborough. It is one of the most important things the district does because it impacts students and teachers, and leaders believe there is a high correlation between ongoing learning among teachers, and student learning. The district tries to limit its priorities to a realistic number, believing that if everyone concentrates on a few, more will be accomplished. The question driving all professional development planning and implementation is, “What will be the benefit to students?” Another core value is the premium placed on collegial collaboration. Ensuring the best education for students hinges significantly on colleagues working together in Professional Learning Communities’ to enhance their teaching, instruction and how students are assessed.

6. Goals of This Practice:

The major goal of this practice is enhancement of student achievement. Components of this goal are providing teachers regular, frequent, integrated and purposeful professional development, and ensuring that

time and venues for collegial collaboration are provided and supported at all levels in the district.

7. Description of This Practice and How it Addresses Criteria for this Lever:

The district's vision and plan is to build its internal capacity for Professional Development in terms of leadership and facilitation of the work through PLC's. Central Office administrators recognize the collective expertise among faculty and know that reliance on internal resources is a strong and sustainable model. They also believe and expect that integration and implementation of what is discussed and planned in PLC's has a high likelihood of occurring when the trainers and leaders are district personnel.

It is critical to have time assigned and structures and routines in places for PLCs to thrive. Professional Development takes many forms including Looking at Student Work, data-driven dialogue, and data coaching. Tuning protocols are used wherever possible to structure the work and ensure everyone participates, and is accountable.

The process by which Professional Development is implemented is as follows:

Professional Development does not occur in silos at different buildings or departments. Rather, district leadership expects that all PD be interconnected in some way. When teachers apply to attend conferences or workshops, they have to submit how they are planning to connect the program to school, department and/or district goals.

PD takes place in a combination of formats including district-wide and site-based. Some teachers have requested more independence and choice but the leadership promotes a unified vision and wants similar base-line experiences for all teachers in the district.

There are 5 full PD days per year – one is a welcome-back and site-based planning day; 2 full days are on targeted PD before the school year starts for all staff; another day is curriculum focused, by grade level and

departments; the fifth day is focused on district initiatives, for example, the new Supervision and Evaluation System, Common Assessments. Feedback from faculty is regularly sought to help inform future planning. The Professional Development Committee is a very active body and meets monthly for planning. Members are always on the lookout for grade level, content and/or department needs, and then district personnel to provide the teaching and training.

The district will hire outside consultants and deploy resources from outside the system as needed – for example, the John Collins Writing Program, to work with teachers and leaders. The terms of hire for John Collins Associates included time spent in classrooms modeling, co-teaching and being videoed. John Collins Associates divide their time between formal training and working along with teachers and students in classrooms. The district leaders see integration of outside trainers into the classroom as a way to sustain the impact of the training in addition to the time when the district trainers are working directly with teachers. The district has offered the John Collins Associates course for 3 continuous summers, and it is always fully enrolled. District personnel; with expertise in and experience with the John Collins Program help make this professional development as comprehensive and sustainable as possible. The district prides itself in the value it places on soliciting input and feedback from teachers about its PD Programs. Surveys and other forms of feedback yield information that informs future long and short term planning for PD. One example of the district’s responsiveness to teacher feedback and needs is its “**Just in Time**” workshops. These are workshops or study groups set up to address specific needs of teachers, groups of teachers, or departments in a building – for example, a Math Intervention Refresher, EDModo, First-Step Math Diagnostic Tools, These courses are offered as often as needed, for as long as needed (2 sessions, 16 hours, and so on), and are generally taught by Foxborough teachers. Sometimes these requests directly follow a PD day – some teachers receive training and immediately feel they need something more.

Criteria Addressed within this Practice:

Professional development is focused on the Common Core of Professional Knowledge and Skills.

Professional development provides substantive learning of content and pedagogy, and most of it is led and implemented by professionals who work in the district, making it ongoing and sustainable.

Professional development takes place in a variety of formats including PLC's, in and out of district training, workshops and courses, whole district and school-based professional development, data collection and coaching, and looking at student work.

Professional development is structured to meet the varying needs and experiences of teachers and administrators. Frequent surveys and other means of soliciting input inform future professional development planning. For example: "**Just in Time**" workshops address highly specific needs and/or focus on large to small groups of staff at any given time. The district's Professional Development Committee, comprised of teachers and administrators, meets often, and is always on the lookout for needs and requests for PD – site and/or district-based.

Professional development aligns district-wide and individual school priorities – time, resources and support are formally allocated to both at the start of the school year, and later, as needed.

The district hired RBT to train leaders and teachers in effective and meaningful ways to collect and interpret data. Focus areas in data collection include student achievement, curriculum, common assessment data, teacher evaluation, and use of technology. Teacher performance and student achievement are measured in light of the professional development offered in the district.

8. Applicable Grade Levels:

All grade levels.

9. How This Practice Changed The District or School:

Foxborough hired RBT (Research for Better Teaching) to work with leaders and faculty in a training entitled **Understanding the Power of Collaborative Inquiry**, which, in the words of the district's Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Amy Berdos, has been a "game changer". In addition to working on a foundation of certain values and beliefs, the district was trained in the importance of the role of data-driven PD. There are now data teams, data coaches and curriculum teams that collect and look at quantitative and qualitative data and research to inform future PD – what to do, why, and how to tie things together across the district. Directors, department chairs, and other specialists help facilitate PD experiences such as Looking at Student Work using specially selected protocols – so the process is standardized and implemented across the whole system. A number of committees – for example, the District Data Team, Early Childhood Committee, Technology Steering Committee, Curriculum Committees, Educator Evaluation Committee – constantly cross-reference their work in monthly meetings led by the Assistant Superintendent. Some ways in which the system is seeing change as a result of the PD work are:

There is greater consistency in curriculum and what is expected of students.

Vertical articulation across grades is stronger.

Collaborative Inquiry and data-driven decisions are powerful and reliable mechanisms for thinking about, planning, implementing and evaluating PD. Examination and use of data leads to informed planning and action, and feedback solicited leads to different action where needed. There is power in the interconnected web of research, planning and outcomes.

10. Resources (time, money, materials) required for successful

implementation):

The greatest resources for this work are human resources. Because time and resources are always limited, planners need to be as creative as possible and also ensure anything planned connects in some ways to district values and goals. Another critical resource is time for teachers to engage in PD. If collaborative work is important, time – in the school day – must be arranged and protected for teachers to meet. As needed, the district arranges substitute teachers for this purpose.

13. Tools You Used to Implement or Advance this Practice (surveys, needs assessments, technology tools, rubrics, feedback forms etc.)

See separate attachment:

- 1) Professional Development Handbook – updated