ACSD#1 Professional Development

Introduction:

Professional development in ACSD #1 focuses on developing both the knowledge and skills associated with highly effective teaching. The work to develop these is done at both the building level and district level. Building level initiatives are outlined in the School Improvement plans for each site. The work done at the district level is described in this document.

Professional Development is grounded in learning opportunities that are presented through formal, semi-formal, and informal modalities. Formal learning opportunities provide universal access to district-wide learning that is based on large-scale assessment data, in particular WYTOPP and ACT scores. These experiences are often structured as in a traditional format in which communication of ideas and content can be consistent and is provided as a baseline of understanding for all educators in our system. These baseline learning opportunities are expanded upon through semi-formal and informal learning opportunities. There are a variety of formal learning activities taking place across the district including work around supporting curriculum, developing High Leverage Practices, and developing and implementing new evaluation processes.

Semi-formal learning is designed to support the learning of small groups of teachers with shared learning needs, areas of interest, or most commonly, shared student needs. The learning in this setting is designed to refine and expand upon universal learning while differentiating based on student learning data that emerges through PLCs, district assessment data, and other building level student learning measures.

Informal learning is the third, and most individualized aspect of the professional development structure. This system for professional learning affords teachers an opportunity to receive support in expanding their knowledge base and develop skills that emerge as areas of need through self-evaluation or evaluation of teacher-developed or PLC-developed check-ins. Informal learning is an extension of the work offered through formal and semi-formal learning settings and is often initiated based on teacher need and interest and is offered through coaching, collaboration, and consultancy opportunities.

All ACSD #1 professional development reflects 5 core tenants. Click on each below to learn more about the professional development initiatives within our system, and how these reflect each tenant.

Embedded & Ongoing	Universal Access and Expectations	Improving student learning	Teacher Centered	Relevant & Responsive
		through improved instructional practice		

Embedded and Ongoing

Creating professional development opportunities that are embedded into the regular work day is a critical attribute of professional development aimed at improving instructional practice for ALL teachers. Coupled with this is work that is ongoing throughout the year. It is known that 30-100 hours (Yoon, Dunchan, Lee, Scarloss, Shapley, 2007) are needed to ensure that adult learners will be positioned to enact new learning in the classroom setting. This is unachievable in a traditional one-and-done setting and requires that professional development is designed to engage learners over time.

Maturing Initiatives

PLC (short cycle)

The PLAN, DO, STUDY, ACT short cycle framework is embedded and ongoing because it happens weekly and bi-weekly at the school site level. Facilitators meet with teams at their locations, and the teams work through the phases starting a new cycle once one is finished. Teams embark on their work at the beginning of the school year and continue meeting until the end of the year. Then at the start of the next year, the work begins again as either a continuation of where the team left off or if there are new team members, the setting of norms before jumping into the short cycle. Teams believe that we can always improve the process and understand that just because something worked for last year's group of students, it does not mean that it will work for this year's students. That attitude ensures that the work of the PLC (short cycle) process is moving forward, evolving, and embedded in the daily learning of the students that teams have in front of them at any moment.

HLP

The High Leverage Practices (HLPs) include 19 core competencies that are critical to student learning in any discipline and at any level. Work to develop and refine these competencies is initiated first through formal, universal professional development sessions. All learning around HLPs continues through embedded and ongoing learning that is integrated through two primary methods: 1. Follow up sessions and 2. Embedded practice.

1. Teachers are offered choice in selecting a year-long follow-up session that extends learning from the initial, universal sessions presented to all faculty and staff. These sessions are designed to allow teachers to choose the sessions that fit both their learning needs and personal scheduling needs (e.g. ongoing book studies, interest-based readings, canvas courses, and the like). These sessions are designed to expand the knowledge base around the HLPs while beginning to develop the skills associated with the HLPs.
2. Teachers are provided with feedback from administrators and instructional coaches on implementation of HLPs in the classroom setting. This may come through observation of practice in real time or through embedded practice opportunities within the PLC setting.

Coaching, Collaboration, and Consultation

Coaching, collaboration, and consultation (CCC) are utilized to afford individual teachers access to support and troubleshooting in a one-on-one setting. Teachers have constant access to these three modalities of support – either through formal scheduling and initiation of traditional coaching cycles, collaborative planning with facilitators, or during problem solving oriented consultation meetings. These are also informally accessible through incidental problem-solving conversations with facilitators. Facilitators are housed within buildings, rather than in a centralized location, in order to afford convenient and timely access to CCC support.

Curriculum Support

Teams in the district have access to the support of an Instructional Facilitator when engaging in collaborative curriculum work. At the Elementary level, District Work Teams meet monthly to engage in the work of developing and revising common district assessments. Teams at the secondary level, with facilitation, continue to develop the curriculum through collaborative planning. Teams review the essential learnings continuously and evaluate the location of essentials on the curriculum maps as well as the effectiveness of the programs and overall curriculum.

Emerging Initiatives

Teacher Evaluations

The new evaluation model is being developed to incorporate both formative opportunities and a summative score. The new model will include opportunities to receive and integrate feedback from an evaluator before the summative evaluation point. This model encourages ongoing observation and refinement of practice. The evaluation development team decided on a single point rubric to promote instructional growth and teacher engagement in the evaluation process. Through the development of teacher selected goals, professional development, data analysis, and administrator focused feedback, evaluation within ACSD #1 is an embedded and ongoing process rather than the typical process of an end of the year observation and score.

New Teacher Induction

The ACSD #1 induction program includes monthly professional development sessions for both new to profession and established teachers who are in their first three years of employment with ACSD #1. Opportunities for development in this program also include regular classroom observations and consultancy with the district induction specialist.

Universal access and Expectations

In an effort to achieve quality instruction for all students at ACSD#1, we focus on a set of universal experiences and learning for faculty and staff. These universal opportunities allow us to work toward consistent communication, consistent expectations, and consistent implementation of high leverage instructional practices.

ACSD#1 uses an online professional development software program, My Learning Plan, to provide information about required and optional trainings at the start of the year, as well as assist educators with obtaining re-certification credits. My Learning Plan can also schedule professional development opportunities to support learning throughout a teacher's career. Teachers can sign up and attend trainings, track their credits, and document their learning.

Maturing Initiatives

PLC

All schools in Albany County School District #1 utilize a PLC short-cycling process: PLAN, DO, STUDY, ACT (PDSA). Instructional facilitators at both the elementary and secondary levels guide grade and subject-level PLC teams in consistently using the framework for work in core subject areas. The universal district expectation is that all PLC groups will follow this framework when assessing and discussing student short cycle data.

HLP

ACSD #1 is committed to support all teachers in developing and refining practice around the HLPs. There is system-wide, defined professional development programming presented at each building during each professional development day. This universal professional development is followed by an expectation that faculty and staff participate in additional follow-up activities selected from a menu of options presented through the My Learning Plan System and access additional support

Coaching, Collaboration, and Consultation

Each building has access to an instructional facilitator for individual or group coaching, consulting and/or collaboration. There is an opportunity for all faculty and staff to access a facilitator or principal to engage in coaching, collaboration, or consultancy.

Curriculum Support

Throughout the K-12 system, grade level and content area teams have identified power standards. From these power standards, essential learning statements that identify the most critical content have been developed. As part of the work, teams have developed curriculum maps that identify at what point in the year students need to demonstrate proficiency with the essential learnings and associated supporting standards. These maps are housed in a universally accessible location within the ATLAS curriculum mapping website. All members of the instructional team, including interventionists and Special Education teachers, have access to the curriculum maps in order to ensure equity in expectations across the system. All teachers within the district are expected to adhere to the curriculum maps when providing instruction to students. During district program adoptions and curriculum development, all teachers are invited to participate in the work.

Emerging Initiatives

New Evaluations

In 2018, a committee of teachers, specialists, and administrators from every school was formed to review the current evaluation model. The committee researched various models of evaluation models before creating an equitable model and universal expectations for practice based on Teaching Works High Leverage Practices. The evaluation categories are: Active Learning, Planning for Teaching, Classroom Management (Learning Environment), Student Engagement, Assessment, and Ethics/Professionalism. Not only does it provide universal access and expectations for all educators, the process of piloting and calibrating the evaluation model will allow administrators a shared knowledge of acceptable practices for meeting expectations.

New Teacher Induction

Our new teacher orientation is provided for all new teachers in our district. New staff meet monthly for support around HLP 7 and 8. Each new teacher is provided a building mentor and an induction specialist that will provide coaching throughout year one and beyond. All new teachers will create goals around practice and be provided support throughout the year

Return to Main Page

Improving student learning through improved instructional practice

Student achievement is a reflection of the quality of the teacher in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Teacher quality is the single strongest indicator of student success. With this in mind, we focus relentlessly on developing and refining teacher practices.

Maturing Initiatives

PLC

The PLAN, DO, STUDY, ACT short cycle framework is based upon tracking student learning. The focus of the work is to ensure that ALL students learn grade level content through collaborative work focused on the district-determined essential learnings required at each grade. Teachers achieve this specifically during the DO phase by discussing their instructional practices regarding district approved programs. Teachers share the different ways they instruct in order to reach the team-decided goals. After examining data during the STUDY phase, teams use the ACT phase to determine what strategies will be used to both enrich and remediate students who have met and not yet met the set goals. This improves student learning and instructional practice by guaranteeing open communication about best practices and what instruction is best for each student.

HLP

The High Leverage Practices define the competencies that are critical for student success, regardless of grade level or content being taught. These practices aim to define the attributes of high leverage teaching and equip teachers to select and implement instructional strategies that align with key attributes of the defined practices. ACSD #1 is relentlessly committed to providing professional development focused on these practices and improving the quality of the instructional practices at play in each classroom across the district. Professional development around the High Leverage Practices are provided through formal, semi-formal, and informal settings in order to maximize teacher acquisition of both knowledge and skill associated with the HLPs, thus seeking to maximize improvements in practice.

Coaching, Collaboration, and Consultation

Recent research from the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning indicates that with classroom coaching, implementation rates of new practices rise 85% - 90%. Coaching, collaboration, and consultation in ACSD #1 are solely focused on improving teacher practice. Teacher's instructional practices and student learning are at the center of CCC interactions. These interactions allow teachers to gain multiple opportunities to learn and apply new practices; they provide a forum for teacher beliefs to be challenged by classroom evidence; and they provide opportunities for teachers to process new information with the support of a facilitator.

Curriculum Support

ACSD #1 works tirelessly to support teachers in implementing the district curriculum effectively. Along with supporting teachers in developing and refining their instructional practices, facilitators and/or principals work with teachers to develop student-responsive calendars for achieving the scope and sequence for content and courses across the system. Regularly, facilitators and principals provide guidance and support in making pacing decisions, enacting, supplementing, and enriching program materials, and balancing the challenges associated with executing program materials in a timely manner while also ensuring learning for ALL students.

Emerging Initiatives

New Teacher Induction

Each month, the Induction Meetings are focused on High Leverage Practices, in particular HLPs 7 and 8 in parallel with the HLPs that are being integrated into teacher learning across the system. The learning activities allow teachers to analyze their practice and identify strategies that support improved student learning. They participate in activities, and have coaching, collaboration, and consultancies that promote digging deeper into HLPs to prepare them for future classroom success.

New Evaluations

The new evaluation model is a single point rubric centered around the key components of the High Leverage Practices. The committee decided on a single point rubric to promote instructional growth and teacher engagement in the evaluation process. Through the development of teacher selected goals, professional development, data analysis, and administrator focused feedback, academic achievement for students should improve.

Return to Main Page

Teacher Centered

Knowing that adult learning theory calls us to allow teacher-learners to have opportunities to be self-directed and internally motivated, our professional development structures draw on the theory of andragogy to increase the effectiveness of our adult education classes. (Knowles, 1975)

Maturing Initiatives

PLC

The [PLAN, DO, STUDY, ACT](#) short cycle framework is centered around teachers making curriculum and instructional decisions collaboratively to increase student achievement. Facilitators ensure that all aspects of PDSA are being addressed, yet, teachers are setting the goals, creating the check-ins, evaluating the data, and teaching/intervening/enriching the students. Teacher teams decide what is needed to ensure that ALL students are learning the grade-required essentials.

HLPs

Each High Leverage Practice is defined through a rich, multilayered narrative. Study of the HLPs is beneficial for all teachers from novice to expert teachers. Drawing from the depth of the practices affords teachers a vast array of pathways for refining their practice. In addition to the initial learning that is presented through universal and consistent professional development, teachers are offered a menu of follow-up experiences to choose from in order to maximize effectiveness and to meet the learning needs of each teacher. In addition to the menu of follow-up choices offered, teachers have access to small group and individualized practice with the focus HLP(s).

Coaching, Collaboration, and Consultation

Professional development in ACSD#1 is teacher centered. [Coaching, consulting and collaboration](#) are based upon what the teacher needs in relation to district and building goals. With the exception of supports provided as part of a professional growth plan, access to CCC is initiated by the teacher and is focused on needs identified by the teacher. Each building has access to a facilitator or principal that can engage in CCC with the teacher. The facilitator supports the teacher's growth based on observations, data collected, and building goals.

Curriculum Support

With the support of Instructional Facilitators, collaborative teams of teachers take the lead in determining power standards, developing essential learnings, creating common district assessments and reviewing and revising curriculum maps. All teachers are invited to participate in this important work at the district level. For teachers who are unable to participate in the work, their feedback and input is solicited regularly and is critical to making revisions and refinements to district curriculum.

Emerging Initiatives

New Evaluations

Our new evaluation system has been developed with a lens on improving teacher practice. Through the new process, teachers will be guided in writing goals around the metrics in the evaluation tool and given feedback throughout the year. This process of goal setting and receiving regular feedback will support teachers in working toward and ultimately achieving their goal - resulting in improved student learning.

New Teacher Induction

Teachers work with the induction specialist to determine a self-created goal around High Leverage Practices. Through the monthly PD and their individual consultancy with the induction coach, new teachers receive guidance in reflecting on and monitoring **their** individual goals.

Return to Main Page

Relevant & Responsive

Internal and external indicators of student academic learning, social/emotional health, and sense of place in our school communities are critical drivers for our professional development foci. Professional development opportunities in ACSD#1 are responsive to data that emerges about student needs.

Maturing Initiatives

PLC

The PLAN, DO, STUDY, ACT short cycle framework is relevant because it is addressing the essential standards that students must learn to be successful in their educational careers. It is responsive, proactive, and needs-based for both teachers and students because teachers will remediate or extend student learning based on the data that comes from the goal check-ins. Our short cycle assessments are always checked against WYTOPP data and other normed assessments. Teachers also receive ongoing PD regarding the short cycle based on their own learning needs.

HLP

ACSD #1 is currently focused on developing teacher competency with HLP 18 – Providing Oral and Written Feedback to Students. This focus is in response to an acknowledgement that feedback can result in both positive and negative effects. After review of student achievement data, it became incumbent to focus on developing instructional practice – providing feedback has a strong effect size and when employed inappropriately can have a negative effect on student learning. For this reason, HLP 18 – Providing Oral and Written Feedback was selected as an instructional practice with great potential for improving student learning in our system.

Coaching, Collaboration, and Consultation
Through our coaching, consulting, and collaboration, we can focus on the immediate needs of the teacher. Whether they require help with classroom management or specific instructional practices, our current coaching, consulting and collaboration model can provide immediate support. Immediate data through observations and teacher consultations help us identify gaps quickly.

Curriculum Support
Curriculum is developed through a vetted process that includes various stakeholders and relies on standards of quality for the content area. Student achievement data, research from the development of the Common Core State Standards, and teacher input are utilized when revising curriculum maps and choosing programs to implement. No curriculum in our district is considered to be static – all documents and processes are reviewed regularly to ensure that we are making instructional choices that are well grounded in research but are also responsive to the needs of our students.

Emerging Initiatives

New Evaluations

ACSD #1 is currently working actively to create and refine an evaluation tool based on High Leverage Practices in response to Chapter 29. District teachers were surveyed, and the results indicated a desire for a more growth minded and teacher inclusive processes. The initial development of the tool included work from a group of teacher representatives, ensuring that it was responsive to the perspectives of the teachers across our system. The tool itself is inherently dynamic in that it allows for the teacher and evaluator to choose goals that are reflective of student learning needs.

New Teacher Induction

HLP 7 & 8 were chosen for all year one teachers based on the knowledge they will promote creating and maintaining productive learning environments and prevent potential issues that might develop. The induction specialist and mentor teachers will continually meet and provide on-site support based on individual teacher needs.

Return to Main Page