

Partnership for Community Learning Centers
Joint Design Team and Action Team meeting
May 18, 2005

Chase Street hosted this joint Design Team and Action Team meeting which was scheduled to provide an opportunity for Action Team representatives to “report out” to and discuss with the full faculties at Chase and Gaines, and the Design Team members, information and progress on their work and recommendations for action in the 5 targeted areas: Literacy, Math, Family Engagement, Specials, and New Visions.

LITERACY: Erin Whitlow and Allison Niedzwiecki reported for this team.

Priorities

1. Professional Development- to provide opportunities for professional development that are both purposeful and useful.
2. Developing a PDA plan or schedule that would allow for flexibility and inclusion of all certified staff.

Professional Development Suggestions

- The CCSD focus for 05-06 is writing with a summer workshop, as well as the implementation of the English/Language Arts GPS. This will dictate some of what our professional learning will be.
- Times for professional development can include PDA times and after school literacy professional development- Continue to receive a PLU for participation at Gaines, implement PLU plan at Chase.
- Study or Book Groups- for an additional PLU, members would meet regularly as a study group.
- PDA time: reserve a portion of PDA time for English/Language Arts GPS, Writing Workshop, district and school concerns/training.
- Have Literacy Coaches at Gaines and Chase give a needs assessment to determine what areas each individual faculty needs professional development in.
- Members of the committee from Chase would like a PLU plan developed for next year, and would like more training in Writers and Readers Workshop.

Suggestions for PDAs

- PDA Unit Plans- each PDA could make their own plans or plan as a group that they could then carry out in the classroom.
- Some ideas include an integrated unit based on grade level standards-(QCC- GPS) or to have 3 blocks of time and have the PDA plan a writing activity, a reading activity and a math activity. Teachers could provide curriculum maps, theme maps, unit plans, etc. for PDA to use to as a guide for subject areas.
- This would allow for the PDA to take ownership in the classroom and schools
- We are planning to look at PDA master schedules to determine what schedule will work best to allow flexibility for grade levels to meet and to provide inclusion of as many staff members as possible.
- Develop 2 plans that would allow for flexibility and meeting across grade levels and that would possibly include special education teachers as well as special area teachers.
- Suggest splitting PDAs with Chase because of shared calendar.
- PDAs could work from 8:15-2:15 for the entire year
- Instead of having two or more PDAs in one room, assign a PDA to the office, media center, literacy coaches, or other special areas when there is an open spot.

Next Steps:

- Continue developing PDA plans and schedules
- Discuss the possibility of PDA Unit Plans at Conversation Days, or as a whole faculty. Develop (other) options for PDAs and the best way to use them in each school.

- Developing a Professional Development needs assessment to be presented to individual faculties.

SPECIALS: Lori Ragsdale reported for this team.

The special area action team prioritized the following objectives:

1. Find time to attend professional development related to our own special area
2. To meet as a specials team in each school and as a Chase/Gaines team to discuss strategies, curriculum, needs and plan for integration
3. To attend a cross curriculum development or to bring in someone to present cross curriculum development to us and classroom teachers

To meet the needs of professional development in our own content area we started a collection of workshops and staff development that we would like to attend. We will need money allocated from the staff development fund and the day(s) off to attend.

In order to accomplish the second objective of meeting together, similar to what the classroom teachers have had during PDA time, we will need release time and someone to cover our classes. We feel that we should meet as a school team at least four times a year but as much as once per month. As a Chase/Gaines team we should meet at least two times per year but as much as once per quarter. Special Education teachers also need time together at each individual school to work on developing student portfolios and IEP staff development.

To meet the needs of our third objective of cross curricular development:

- We would like for each grade level to provide us with their curriculum map
- Specials should focus on 2-4 things total per year to teach along with classroom teachers such as: Black History, Poetry Unit, Butterfly Development, Sound Unit
- Watch any videos on integration that look appropriate
- Invite University professors of differing subject areas to teach a lesson together demonstrating the use of several content areas (i.e. language arts, music, p.e.)
- Have district personnel teach an integrated lesson (Ginger Jewel or Paul Simms because Ginger has an art degree and Paul a music degree)

Once the schools schedules start taking place we can develop a time line of when and how often the specials teachers can meet and attend professional development.

Please be considerate of our need to meet together as plans for the classroom teachers professional development takes shape.

NEW VISIONS: Jennifer Aaron, Em Fields and Jenny Penney Oliver reported for this team.

The New Visions team divided their work into 3 main areas:

- 1) **Expanding the partnership** to
 - a) other schools in Clarke County
 - b) include UGA graduate courses offered on site
- 2) **Creative ways to learn**
 - a) for students
 - *service learning--
 - *project approach
 - *integrated instruction--??
 - b) for teachers—action research
- 3) **Looping**

RE: Creative ways to learn, Jennifer Aaron discussed the work related to Democratic Service Learning:

A quick survey was sent out to the two schools inquiring about interest in Academic service-learning. Thirty surveys were returned, 15 from each school. The following is a copy of the survey and the results.

The *National and Community Service Act* (1990) defined service-learning as

“a method in which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that address actual needs in their community through curriculum integration. It is a method that provides structured time for students to think, talk, or write about what they did and observed during a service activity and chances to use newly-acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities. Such activities enhance teaching in school by extending student learning into the community and help foster a sense of a caring for others.”

This survey is an information gathering expedition for the New Visions Action Team.

Please check the statement that best describes your level of interest in academic service-learning and then send it back to me--just hit "reply," choose your answer and then hit "send."

- 5 I'd like to give it a try, as soon as possible.
- 7 I would like to learn more and maybe try it, but not immediately.
- 14 I would be interested to learn more about it.
- 6 It seems like a fine idea for OTHER teachers.
- 0 I hate the idea and would leave my school rather than try it.

The New Visions action team recommends that study/support groups begin at each school, based on the number of interested people at each. This study/support group would read about academic service-learning, discuss topics brought to the group, and support those who are implementing it in their classrooms.

The following handout was provided for more information.

Proposal: Establish DIG – Democratic Inquiry Group

Rationale: The ultimate purpose of American public education is to help students learn how to be compassionate, problem-solving citizens in a democratic society. It is *not* the job of schools to help students merely fit into the society that they will inherit. It *is* the job of schools to help each generation envision a better future and acquire the dispositions, skills, and experiences to make it happen. Our youngest citizens need a democratic education, for which service-learning is an indispensable element. (Lew Allen & Kathy Thompson, *Make It Democratic Service Learning*)

Purpose of DIG: to study, discuss, and, for those who wish, develop Democratic Academic Service-Learning approaches to teaching. This study group would be for those interested in Democratic Service Learning, those who would like to get their feet wet, and for those who find themselves in the deep end and would like a support network to assist them in their practice.

Goal: to prepare students who know how to investigate all aspects and perspectives on issues vital to their communities; to connect these inquiries to state and local performance learning standards; to develop, propose, and participate in the implementation of plans of action; and to work actively towards a more just and democratic society. According to Westheimer & Kahn (2004, “What kind of Citizen?: The Politics of Educating for Democracy”) these are citizens who “critically assess social, political, and economic structures to see beyond surface causes; who seek out and address areas of injustice; and who know about democratic social movements and how to effect systemic change” – e.g., beyond contributing to a food drive, students “explore why people are hungry and act to solve root causes.”

Research (Shelly Billig, 2000) – service learning, done well, has been shown across many grades and student populations to increase student investment in school, motivation, behavior, and academic achievement

The following five principles, adopted from the work of Carl Glickman, help define democratic service learning:

1. Students work actively with problems, ideas, materials, and people as they learn academic skills and content.
2. Students have escalating degrees of choice and decision making within the parameters provided by teachers in the design, research, and action stages of the project
3. Students contribute to their community through their focus on real community problems as identified through talks with community members and in active partnership **with** (not for) various groups in Athens Clarke County and UGA
4. Students demonstrate their learning in public settings and receive public feedback.
5. Students are taught and assessed according to high academic standards. All aspects of DSL are focused on learning based on GPS/CCSD standards integrated into student designed projects; critical thinking and problem solving are emphasized

Possible Readings and websites:

- Gary Manning, Maryann Manning, Roberta Long (1994) Theme Immersion: Inquiry-Based Curriculum in Elementary and Middle Schools
- hooks, b. (2004). *Teaching community*. Select chapters.
- Allen, J. (1999). *Class Actions: Teaching for Social Justice in Elementary and Middle School* (select chapters written by Athens teachers)
- Edelsky, C. (1999). *Making justice our project*. Select chapters.
- <http://www.servicelearning.org/> - The Learn and Serve America National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (NSLC) supports the service-learning community in higher education, kindergarten through grade twelve, community-based initiatives and tribal programs, as well as all others interested in strengthening schools and communities using service-learning techniques and methodologies.
- <http://www.learnandserve.org/>
- <http://learningindeed.org/index.html>
- <http://www.umich.edu/~mjcs/> - The Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning (MJCSL) is a national, peer-reviewed journal consisting of articles written by faculty and service-learning educators on research, theory, pedagogy, and issues pertinent to the service-learning community.

Re: looping, Em Fields reported information and research the committee had gathered on the pros and cons of looping on academic achievement and social development for children.

Re: extending the Partnership, Jenny Penney Oliver shared the recent conversation with Supt. Holloway and Dean Castenell who both support the extension of the Partnership, the fact that a small committee is being established to begin working on the details/criteria/information to be used to make other schools aware of the opportunity, and handed out the handout (following) describing the ideas related to extending the Partnership. The team hopes to have information available for dissemination to other schools in early fall.

DRAFT: Proposal to Begin a Discussion of Extending the Partnership to Interested Schools

We began by thinking about what seems to have been the most effective areas of growth and change to date in the comprehensive school reform/renewal of the Partnership. We believe regular long-term professional development has been most important, followed by extended opportunities for children to learn (initially the additional 15 days, now the inter-sessions). The development of Family Resource Centers, more democratic decision making, and the involvement of UGA students with CCSD students has also been important. For the specific goals – these and others – of a school to happen through partnership, we believe a go-to person, an advocate, a facilitator, a connector of some kind may be important for each school. Here is one way we have thought about expanding:

1. Invite applications from any interested CCSD school to become a partnership schools.
 - a. Add 2 schools the first year.
 - b. Add one school per year, as long as interest warrants.
 - c. Encourage/recruit high-need schools to apply, since the partnership was originally formed to help those schools with the greatest needs.
2. New partnership schools would develop their own goals and elements of school reform. These may or may not include current CLC structures such as Family Resource Centers, balanced calendar and intersession, etc.
3. Invite faculty in the COE (and perhaps other colleges) to apply to be Partnership Faculty Liaisons.
4. Partnership schools (including existing ones) would invite interested UGA faculty to talk with them about goals, visions, interests, etc. – a dialogic interview.
5. Schools (teachers, parents, perhaps students) would select their Faculty Liaisons.
6. Each school would develop a Partnership contract that might include elements such as how the Faculty Liaison would be involved with
 - a. Working to meet the school's goals in their School Improvement Plans
 - b. Developing and working towards other school goals that may be tangential to the SIP but important to the overall well-being of the school, students, and families
 - c. Facilitating connections with UGA resources
 - d. Facilitating connections with the ACC community resources
 - e. Attending appropriate meetings (e.g., faculty meetings, SIP, or others specific to the liaison role)
 - f. Facilitating opportunities for Partnership school faculty, parents, and students to be resources to UGA and ACC (e.g., speaking to classes, being demonstration classrooms, taking on community projects)
7. Each Faculty Liaison would receive one course release each year, with the buy-out to go to her/his department. In exchange, CCSD would offer one school-based course per Liaison.
 - a. Courses could be taught as a regular one-semester course, or spread out over the year.
 - b. Courses would be designed with faculties across the district to meet their specific needs in any area (e.g., high school biology, ESOL, etc.)
 - c. Courses could be taught by anyone in the COE and ideally in conjunction with district teachers or community service providers working together as a team. They could also be taught by CCSD teachers with a UGA faculty-of-record.
 - d. Where possible, CCSD could provide support through stipends or tuition reimbursement from PL funds at the building or district level.
 - e. Advantages:
 - i. the COE would maintain or even increase credit hour production
 - ii. the district would have ongoing, tailored professional learning opportunities
 - iii. more teachers might enroll in graduate programs

8. Faculty Liaisons would meet monthly as members of the Design Team, which would be reconstituted with FLs, teachers, and parents from each partnership school.
9. For this to be self-sustaining, we hope to do it without extensive external funding. Additional resources from UGA would, however, be most useful in creating these additional components
 - a. Partnership mini-grants for faculty in the COE and CCSD to do collaborative research projects
 - b. Funding for annual day-long planning retreats and curriculum exchanges to be held on school planning days

Other ideas???

April, 2005

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT: Lynn Heyen reported for this team.

Gaines and Chase faculties met together 2 times and discussed some general issues and priorities they share related to family engagement. Ultimately each school decided to meet as a school based group in order to apply the priority areas more specifically to their school improvement plan. Among the general topics discussed and agreed on by both schools as important were:

I) Increasing communication between school and home

- a) Have 1 event at the beginning of the school year at a community center.

Needs to be in the beginning of the school year as to establish rapport and make contact

- b) There was much discussion regarding making home visits and there was a concern for safety and of teacher's time.

Discussion and solutions were:

- 1) Teachers need to prioritize the students as being "at-risk" or like wise and make sure to visit them first.

- 2) Maybe "team up" with another teacher for home visits, or ask the Family Engagement coordinators to accompany you on the visits.

- 3) Possibly get comp time for time spent making the home visits, or be allowed to use one of the early pre-planning days for visits for those prioritized students

- 4) Have a sheet where teachers are to document parent contact and make it mandatory that teachers speak to the parents every so often (part of school improvement plan).

II) Increase family engagement at the school (increasing parent participation with school events)

- a) Gaines looked into getting the automatic dialing service call parents when important events were coming up. She is waiting on a call back from Lynn Pace regarding whether the service can be used by individual schools or not.

- b) Both schools will compile a list of all churches and any possible contact people there.

- c) Survey families about their needs/interest and topics they would like information on re: community resources, etc. Perhaps sponsor an “Agency Night”.
- d) Use a covered dish dinner that the parents contribute as well as teachers for one of the monthly school meetings.
- e) Have fewer meetings per month, and make sure that ALL information is given during that meeting including having a representative from parent council to speak and give an update, it was also agreed that the representative should be a parent.

III) Increase school-based resources through community groups

- a) There was some discussion about getting the nursing students here to assist with screenings, it was mentioned that Rudene Bellamy, and Regina Childs would be a good resource for this and e-mails should be sent out. It was reported back that Chase does do screenings and we are looking into Gaines. It was presented that the school system does do screenings to 3rd graders and that is all that is required.
- b) Explore offering Spanish classes to teachers. Between Gaines and Chase there were about 30 people that said that they were interested. Dr. Martin contacted someone from the partnership to see if this was possible and was told that at this time there is no money to assist with this.

MATH: A full report is not yet available for the Math presentation.