

**Final Report
Springfield District Wide Professional Development Project
2009-2011**

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Project History

Antioch University New England and the Springfield, Vermont School District have enjoyed a long relationship around professional learning. For many years, this relationship was embodied by the offering of graduate credit for district offerings as dictated internally. While we observed that the quality of these offerings varied widely, ANE sought to maintain a relationship that would support teachers in the application of their professional learning experiences. District leadership have since noted their own dismay at this as well as a concern about teacher attitudes towards the importance of professional learning experiences. In the spring of 2009, however, district administration approached us with a request that we offer assistance in the process of re-envisioning professional development activities as a series of graduate level courses to be offered on-site with current Antioch Core and Adjunct faculty as instructors. In collaboration with teachers, union leadership and building administration, we created a set of eight courses designed to meet the needs (as identified internally) of teachers in the district. These courses were:

- The Developing Mind
- Problem-Based Learning
- Visual Teaching Strategies
- Assessment for Learning
- The 21st Century Learner
- School Change
- Co-Teaching
- Differentiated Instruction

Following a relatively successful implementation, the project was extended through the 2010-2011 school with the following revised course offerings:

- Assessment
- Co-Teaching
- Visual Teaching Strategies (VTS)
- School Change
- Problem Based Learning
- The Developing Mind
- Action Based Teaching for Restorative Justice (New)

Two courses from the 2009-2010 project year were abandoned in response to poor feedback from course participants. Budget constraints precluded the addition of two new courses, though one course- Action Based Teaching for Restorative Justice- was added at the request of district administrators in response to feedback from the 2009-2010 instructors and the recommendation of participants.

At the conclusion of the 2009-2010 project year, the following conclusions and recommendations were made:

... preliminary data show that the Springfield District Wide Professional Development Project was successful in shifting teacher attitudes towards the possibilities inherent in professional learning, though questions remain about the consistency of that success across the different courses. The same conclusion can be drawn regarding changes in classroom practice- there is evidence that changes occurred, but it is unclear how consistent those changes were. It is also unclear how long lasting these changes will be. Finally, it is too soon to draw conclusions about changes in student achievement as a result of this project.

Looking into the future of the project, we make the following recommendations:

- 1. The process for selecting future course offerings should include not only the results of this evaluation, but also the requests of teachers and emerging student achievement data.*
- 2. Instructors should provide the syllabus and pre-readings in advance of the first class meeting in order to continue to increase the level of rigor and the expectation of graduate-level engagement in the work.*
- 3. August course meetings should be limited to two days, allowing for the final class meeting to take place in early or mid spring.*
- 4. School level leadership should participate in either the general course offerings or in their own course during the 2010-2011 project year.*
- 5. Instructors should schedule coaching days during class meetings rather than trying to schedule sessions individually.*
- 6. Baseline data about teachers use of the methods should be gathered either via observation or through teacher self-reporting.*
- 7. An observation tool should be generated for use during coaching so that instructors can generate data about changes in classroom practice.*
- 8. Teachers and administrators should be given an opportunity to celebrate and share their learning district-wide in order to continue to increase the credibility of professional development as a tool for improved instruction.*
- 9. Instructors should be encouraged to use work from the teachers' own classrooms as examples whenever possible in order to further de-privatize practice.*

Recommendations in red (numbers 5 and 6) were implemented fully. Those in green (1, 2 and 8) were partially implemented as described below. Remaining recommendations were not implemented.

Methodology

The bulk of the data gathered in conjunction with this project was generated through the administration and re-administration of a single instrument- the ACSR Workshop Evaluation tool (see Appendix A). Participants were asked to complete the instrument at the culmination of the August, September and January workshop days. Additional data was gathered through written final reports provided by the course instructors and district administration. Since the majority of the data reflects the criteria used in the workshop rubric, we will utilize those categories (Facilitation, Materials, Content and Overall) as the framework for our reporting. At the outset of the 2010-2011 project year, we administered a formative assessment in order to gauge both participant interest and previous knowledge of course content.

Sample size

During the 2009-2010 year, 373 evaluation forms were completed across the three course dates, with an average response of 124 per date. The largest respondent category (85%) categorized themselves as Teacher- Not Specified, with the seconded largest category designated as either Teacher- elementary or Other- please specify (which comments revealed to include an overwhelming majority of self- identified Special Educators). Additional demographic factors included the length of service in the district (0-3 years- 10.8%, 4-7 years- 17.1%, 8-10 years - 9.8%, and 10+ years - 62.3%) and gender (20.4% Male and 79.6% Female).

During the 2010-2011 school year, 169 participants registered for courses with a total of 235 completed responses with an average of 78 responses per date. Again, the largest respondent category (61%) categorized themselves as Teacher- Not Specified, with the seconded largest category designated as either Teacher- elementary or Other- please specify (which comments revealed to include an overwhelming majority of self- identified Special Educators). Demographic factors remained essentially the same across both years as well. Additional data was gathered through the 108 responses to the Formative Assessment (pre-course) and the Summative Assessment (38 respondents).

Research Questions

The goals of the “Springfield District Wide Professional Development Project” were multiple. Specifically, we sought to increase the level of rigor in the professional learning opportunities for teachers in order to improve classroom practice and increase student achievement. In this program evaluation, we sought to measure these outcomes in terms of the following questions:

1. What changes in classroom practice resulted from this project?
2. What changes in the level of teacher attitude towards professional learning resulted from this project?

General trends

Overall, participants were quite happy with their experiences in these courses across both years. Over 95% of participants rated the facilitation, content and overall experiences of their courses as a 4 or a 5 on the 5-point scale used in the instrument. While 95% rated materials as a 4 or 5 in the first year of the project, this rating fell to an 81% in the second year with another 12% rating materials as a 3. In the first year, 90% also responded that they would be interested in participating in additional coursework. This fell to 83% in the second year. These responses were generally consistent across the August, September and January dates, with the lowest evaluations offered after the January class. Participants were also asked to identify trends in the district, with the most prevalent issues identified as funding, morale (trust, communication, etc) and poverty within the community.

Course Selection and Satisfaction

While we cannot presume to understand the particular reasons for course selections, we can observe the following trends. In the first year of the project, teachers with 10+ years in the district were most likely to select Co-Teaching (22.8%) or Visual Teaching Strategies. By the second year, this same group was most likely to select The Developing Mind (28.6%), Assessment (17.9%) or School Change (15.5%). (It should also be noted that the Curriculum Coordinator found it necessary to place a higher number of teachers into courses in the second year, while in the first year only a few teachers failed to make selections of their own volition.)

Among teachers with 8-10 years of experience in the district, the most popular course selections during year one were School Change (29%) and The Developing Mind (25%). In year two, 45% of this group selected or were placed in the Co-Teaching course, with another 25% selecting Assessment and 15% participating in the Problem Based Learning course.

33% of those with 4-7 years of experience selected the Visual Teaching Strategies course, with the Assessment course representing the second most popular choice (18.5%). In year two, this shifted to 35% selection of Problem Based Learning and 23% participation in the Co-Teaching course.

Those with the least experience in the district (0-3) also preferred the VTS course with 32.4% participating in that course with Co-Teaching ranking second at 17.6%. In year two, the overwhelming course favorite was School Change (43%) followed by Assessment (23%).

When looking at Course Satisfaction (as determined by the “Overall” section of the rubric), through the lens of experience, it is important to note that the 10+ cohort was more likely to rank their experience a 4 or 5 overall in the second year than in the first. It is also important to note that 44 respondents skipped this question in year two.

More in-depth analysis revealed a fairly evenly division among the content, facilitation and materials areas- those who ranked their overall experience as a 2 or 3 seemed to rank

these other categories as a 2 or 3 as well. However, 90.2% of this group responded positively to the question, “Would you be interested in participating in another workshop on this topic, building upon the learning from today?” By course, participants responded affirmatively to that question at the following rates during year 1:

The Developing Mind	97.1%
Problem-Based Learning	95.7%
Visual Teaching Strategies	94.2%
Assessment	91.3%
21 st Century Learning	90.5%
School Change	89.2%
Co-Teaching	84.8%
Differentiated Instruction	75%

In year 2, affirmative responses occurred in the following distributions:

The Developing Mind	83%
Problem-Based Learning	70%
Restorative Justice	90%
Assessment	89%
School Change	74%
Visual Teaching Strategies	94%
Co-Teaching	94%

It is unclear from the question whether students answered in the negative because they felt as though they had gained sufficient knowledge of the content or because they found the content not to be useful or important. Several respondents commented that they would need more information in order to decide or that they would be willing to take additional coursework with the instructor on a different topic. It is also unclear as to whether an affirmative answer should be interpreted to mean a second level of this course should be offered in subsequent years.

It is also worth noting that graduate credit enrollment in previous years was quite low (fewer than 10 students per year since 2006). Combined graduate enrollment for year one was 82. The completion rate for this (typically less than 50%) was over 90% across both years of the project. (Note: Since Antioch does not utilize letter grades, instead providing narrative feedback for work completed, an average GPA is not possible to determine. The evaluative rubric used by the institution, however, requires students to demonstrate proficiency before credit is awarded.)

Instructor Reports

Instructors were required to address a series of evaluative questions both in the focus group as the close of the course and in written form at the culmination of their coaching sessions. Instructors identified the strengths and weaknesses of the project, the challenges and changes in teacher behavior they identified and their recommendations for improvement. Using broad strokes, we identify the following trends across both years of the project:

Instructors liked the combination of coaching and course work as the spine of the model and appreciated the level of participation among the faculty. Specifically, one instructor noted that the combination of school-based cohorts and district wide participation made for a powerful learning experience. They appreciated the scheduling of the course, but they were uncertain about ending coursework in January, wondering if there might not be merit in an additional meeting in the spring as opposed to three full days in August. Instructors were inconsistent in their response to the instructional space (some found their classroom spaces too small) and to the ease of scheduling coaching days (some had no trouble, others struggled with teachers failing to commit to coaching dates). Year two of the project found an improvement on the later point as instructors became more skilled in scheduling coaching dates. There was, however, consensus on the need for increased collaborative processes opportunities for teachers engaged in the work and for increased participation and support from building administration.

In regards to changes in teacher behavior, the VTS course (Roeder) reported the highest degree of change in practice across both years. The instructor in Differentiated Instruction course (Dr. Hart) reported difficulty in accurately measuring changes in behavior due to a lack of baseline data but estimated some level of change in 2/3 of teachers. Dr. Julius (Assessment) reported a increase in the use of formative assessments but found teachers very uncomfortable with allowing him into their classrooms, resulting in a limited data set in this area. Dr. Hart was the instructor in this course during year two and found evidence of change in practice but did not collect quantitative data on the rate of change. Peter Eppig (Problem Based Learning) reported a high degree of enthusiasm for coaching sessions as well as evidence of a high degree of implementation of the content during his observations during both years. The 21st Century Learner course (Dr. Gordon) reported the lowest level of change in behavior, but we must also acknowledge that this course was the most theoretical of those offered. (This course was not offered in year 2).

Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, preliminary data show that the Springfield District Wide Professional Development Project was successful in shifting teacher attitudes towards the possibilities inherent in professional learning, though questions remain about the consistency of that success across the different courses. The same conclusion can be drawn regarding changes in classroom practice- there is evidence that changes occurred, but it is unclear how consistent those changes were. It is also unclear how long lasting these changes will be. Finally, it is too soon to draw conclusions about changes in student achievement as a

result of this project. As budgetary restraints preclude the continuation of the project, we make the following recommendations for future efforts in the district:

1. Increased opportunities for collaboration between teachers and administrators.
2. Continued use of graduate credit as a tool for increasing teacher participation in and commitment to professional learning.
3. Revised scheduling for professional learning, with an emphasis on reserving the preponderance of August dates for classroom preparation and building-wide collaboration.

We close with these words from Dr. Dreyer Leon, a former Springfield teacher and an instructor in the project

I think the idea of shared content experiences for faculty is STILL a good one. I think this project represents a step forward in thinking about the role and purpose of professional development in the district. I think it was better the first year when faculty was more involved in choosing/planning the topics. I think the REAL shift in the district is when the definition of professional development is “everything schools do to keep on track for their mission & vision.” It’s not external service provision. It’s not a course. It’s when teachers and administrators use their collective time to engage in collaborative processes that allow them to identify needs and areas where they want their school to grow, bring in the resources to help them meet those needs, study the results of their efforts, make the next logical steps. It’s the creation of real learning community in each building and then finding ways to engage in vertical discussions really based on deep needs expressed by teachers, students, families and administrators. I continue to believe that Springfield could have an excellent little school system. We have so many wonderful teachers and a lot of community support for our schools and our students. I think this project has been a good one, but it’s time to take the next step and start really trusting teachers to be willing to engage with colleagues at the building level to make their schools better. PD is not about improving individual teachers...it’s about improving teaching and learning opportunities for all students and that’s a collaborative act!!

Appendix A- Workshop Evaluation

Antioch Center for School Renewal Workshop Evaluation

	1	2	3	4	5
Facilitation	The presenter was unenthusiastic, apathetic, and/ or condescending. (S)he seemed ill prepared.	<i>The presenter was semi-prepared, but seemed nervous and/or lacked confidence.</i>	The presenter was prepared and competent, but not inspirational or interesting.	<i>The presenter was very well prepared, able to adjust to the needs of the group, and showed a high level of enthusiasm.</i>	The presenter was inspirational and very knowledgeable. One of the best I've seen.
Materials	Handouts and visual aids were poor quality and distracted from the overall presentation.	<i>Handouts and visual aids were appropriate, but used badly.</i>	Handouts and visual aids were appropriate, but added little to the presentation.	<i>Handouts and visual aids were useful in understanding the presentation, but not worth keeping in the long term.</i>	Handouts and visual aids were not only useful in the short-term, but will help me in future work.
Content	The material presented was dated. I already know this and think my peers do, too.	<i>The material presented reflected information that I know, but believe my peers may not.</i>	The material presented was up-to-date, but didn't reflect my needs or those of my peers.	<i>The material presented was up-to-date, reflecting the needs of my peers. I, however, gained little new information.</i>	The material presented was cutting edge, reflecting the needs of all participants.
Overall	This workshop was a waste of time. I would not participate in another ACSR workshop, given the opportunity.	<i>This workshop was of inconsistent value and a missed opportunity.</i>	This workshop was fine. I found some portions more useful than others, but feel that I gained something through the day.	<i>This workshop was good. I will use this information and wish to learn more about the topic. I would take another ACSR workshop, given the opportunity.</i>	This workshop was one of the best. I will actively seek out opportunities to use the information and will look for future ACSR workshops in which to participate.

Demographic information (optional):

What is your current role: _____ How many years have you been in that role? _____ What is your gender? ___M___ F Age: _____

Please use the back if necessary: What are the most pressing issues facing your school, district or organization right now?

What other suggestions or affirmations do you have for the facilitator(s)?

Would you be interested in participating in another workshop on this topic, building upon the learning from today? ___yes___



**Antioch Center for School Renewal
Final Project Reporting Form**

The information provided below will be used by ACSR in generating the final project report to the client. Please be as detailed as possible, recognizing that any of this information may be shared with the client. If you wish to include data or anecdotes that you would not like to have shared (or wish to have shared anonymously), please specify as such.

Project: Springfield District Wide Professional Development

Date: 2010-2011 School Year

Location: Springfield, Vermont

Name:

e-mail:

1. What was your role in this project?
2. What do you believe to be the strengths and weaknesses of this project overall?
3. What, if any, changes in teacher behavior or philosophy did you encounter?
4. What, if any, challenges did you encounter?
5. What, if any, recommendations do you have for changes or improvements to this project?

EVALUATIVE DESCRIPTORS for Courses and Supervised Independent Studies (SISs)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS	UNSATISFACTORY	SATISFACTORY W/CONCERNS	GOOD	VERY GOOD	EXCELLENT	OUTSTANDING
CLASS PARTICIPATION	Student did not attend class, and/or gave no sign of attending to what went on, and/or participated in ways that were inappropriate and disruptive to the learning process of others.	Student was present in class and appeared to be attending to what took place, but either did not participate actively, or participated in an inappropriate way. Some remediation (specify) needs to be arranged.	Student occasionally raised questions and/or offered some contributions to class discussions. Participations was appropriate and helpful to the learning of others.	Student was active in class and made useful contributions which included real engagement with key issues represented in the syllabus. Student gave evidence of considering the learning needs of classmates in addition to his/her own learning process.	Student raised points that were original, and engaged instructor/other students in dialog that broke new ground. Student gave evidence of considering the learning needs of classmates in addition to his/her own learning process.	Instructor could, in all good conscience, have asked student to conduct a session of the class.
MASTERY OF COURSE CONTENT	Student either gave evidence of not grasping the basic theoretical concepts or did not complete all the course assignments. Corrective action or remediation is needed.	Student gave evidence of grasping theoretical concepts to the extent of attempting to apply the material to professional situations, though not in an effective way. Some remediation needed.	Student gave evidence of understanding and successfully applying the key concepts of the course.	Student absorbed, understood and applied the key concepts of the course in a particularly clear and effective manner.	Student consistently showed mastery of subject matter by using concepts to illuminate professional situations in an original way, leading to new learning for the instructor and the class.	Student demonstrated insights so original as to warrant passing on to future students.
QUALITY OF DOCUMENTATION	Paper(s) unacceptable with respect to content, organization, and/or writing style (specify). Some remediation (specify) needs to be arranged.	Paper(s) were minimally acceptable with respect to content, organization, and writing style; there were some problems in one or more of these areas (specify), but not so severe as to warrant handing the paper(s) back. Some remediation (specify) needs to be arranged.	Paper(s) adequate with respect to content, organization, and writing style.	Paper(s) particularly clear, well-organized, and/or well written.	Paper(s) both competent (or better) in execution, and original/creative in their approach to the topic; paper(s) could be used as a model for other students.	Paper(s) showed particularly clear and creative approach to the topic, an approach that's rarely seen, and were of publishable quality.
OVERALL COURSE PERFORMANCE	Student's work was characterized by such major problems (specify) that no credit for the course can be given. Some corrective action/remediation (specify) needs to be arranged.	Student's performance in the course was minimally acceptable; there were some major problems (identify), though not severe enough to be considered "Unsatisfactory." Some corrective action/remediation (specify) needs to be arranged.	Student's performance in the course was basically competent with no major problems.	Student solidly fulfilled course requirements, and integrated course material in a particularly clear and effective manner.	Student's performance showed originality over and above solid competence; instructor and class learned from student's contributions to the learning process.	Student's performance in course was so competent and original that instructor experienced student as if he/she were a colleague or peer taking the course.

