

NAME: Krista Sevajian

POSITION: Assistant Principal

CONFERENCE ATTENDED: NISL Course 1: Unit 4

DATE(S): 1/22/19-1/23/19

LOCATION: Edinboro IU

A. Summary of Conference Session Attended

Promoting the Learning Organization, is the last unit in Course One, *World-Class Schooling: Vision and Goals*.

During this course, we discussed the principles of instructional leadership in a global economy, highlighting the importance of strategic, systems thinking.

This unit deepens the discussion of how to make all of this happen within a school community. What are the professional learning needs of the adults in the building? How can participants create a culture that values and nurtures learning at all levels? More specifically, what are the specific leadership skills and decisions needed to implement this kind of high-functioning learning system? These are the questions that create the structure and drive the learning in this unit.

Day 1 connected earlier units to professional learning and capacity-building within the school. It began by applying some of the research about the importance of surfacing learners' prior knowledge. In this case, we addressed the impediment of negative mindsets and low standards associated with teacher professional development based on traditional, in-service training. From there, the focus is on the Center for International Education Benchmarking (CIEB) report *Beyond PD: Teacher Professional Learning in High-Performing Systems*, which details the professional learning programs and practices of four successful school systems: Shanghai, Singapore, Hong Kong, and British Columbia. Using these models as benchmarks, participants identify the critical success factors and leader behaviors that support the components of those systems. Finally, each leader will perform a gap analysis to identify specific opportunities for changing practice at their own schools. Implications for next steps connect directly to the Action Learning Project that each participant prepares as part of the Executive Development Program.

Day 2 used the Principal Decisions Simulation, which provided participants a chance to apply our learning from the preceding units, including the Day 1 section on professional learning. The simulation had three parts:

1. The opening, in which each team characterized their own team's competencies and analyzed a baseline school scenario to build consensus on priority goals for the year
2. The game, a simulation in which we moved through an academic year encountering a variety of new issues, challenges, and opportunities
3. The debrief, which drew out our insights on setting goals, facing challenges, dealing with team dynamics, and aligning staff competencies with professional learning opportunities

This team-based leadership simulation served not only as a way to integrate learning from prior units, but also as a prologue to Course Two, in which participants study what it means to build and sustain effective teams.

**B. Reflection on Conference Value: Explain how this conference aligns with district initiatives, programs, and instruction.**

I learned and solidified the importance of providing highly effective, and (more) personalized professional development for the professionals that work with our students every day. Realizing that in-service may have served as a "one size fits all" model in the past, I developed a capacity for creating learning experiences that are relevant and aligned to district goals and teacher needs.

Mr. Vuckovich and Mr. Rizzo demonstrated this knowledge by providing an incredibly powerful day of professional development for us all! All means all. Everyone was invited, everyone was to be present and build their knowledge based on highly effective sessions provided by the professionals of IASD. Additionally, all employees selected 5 sessions that could enhance their knowledge and practices followed by a dedicated work session with grade level teams or departments. What an experience to learn through the NISL program how to create professional learning communities effectively and then to in turn see one strategy used so effectively by our leadership team leaders, Mike and Bob.

I truly look forward to and will take action on creating more effective learning communities within our school district and specifically within the building that I am chosen to lead.

Thank you for this opportunity.

NAME: Krista Sevajian

POSITION: Assistant Principal

CONFERENCE ATTENDED: NISL Course 2: Unit 5

DATE(S): 1/31/19

LOCATION: Grove City IU

A. Summary of Conference Session Attended

This unit, Coaching for High-Quality Teaching, began Course Two, *Sustaining Transformation through Capacity and Commitment*, which expands the conversation to target the larger systems of school organization and management as defined by the NISL Wheel. This unit develops school leaders' capacity to recognize and apply the research-based instructional design principles supporting deeper learning and transfer as a basis for coaching conversations and performance improvement.

Day 2 focused on coaching and performance analysis as it relates to classroom observation and professional development. In education and other sectors, both nationally and internationally, coaching has emerged as an effective method for helping leaders improve their performance and the performance of their organizations. This day examined the NISL coaching model (focused on listening, questioning, observing, giving and receiving feedback, reflecting, inspiring, and celebrating).

Finally, we connected the issue of coaching for teaching efficacy and equity, along with the Performance Analysis Framework, to the NISL Wheel—with a particular emphasis on “High-Quality Teachers and Teaching” and “High-Performance Organization and Management.”

B. Reflection on Conference Value: Explain how this conference aligns with district initiatives, programs, and instruction.

I learned and solidified the importance of providing highly effective, and (more) personalized professional feedback and coaching for the professionals that work with our students every day. Realizing that conversations require a laser focused pathway and intention for occurring, I developed a capacity for creating learning experiences that are relevant and aligned to district goals and teacher needs through productive, focused, question oriented conversations. I learned what loaded questions can sound like and cause in people and how to reword things so that people can be more productive and responsive.



Name: Dr. Sarah Bond

Position: SH English and JH Reading Teacher

Conference Attended: 2019 Pennsylvania Title I Improving School Performance Conference

Dates: January 14-16, 2019

Location: Station Square, Pittsburgh, PA

## *A. Summary of conference sessions attended*

### **Keynote Sessions**

*Dr. Ignacio Lopez, President of Harold Washington College*

Dr. Lopez began his address by sharing some background information about himself and the book he wrote, *Keeping it Real and Relevant*. From his description, the book might be one to use as a book study for those in the SEL pilot. He went on to explain the need for teachers to break down the assumptions students and families have so that they can build trust with their community. Dr. Lopez continued to describe three activities he uses to build foster empathy. Dr. Lopez concluded by sharing how empathy leads to trust and how mistrust can lead to lower educational attainment in a community.

*Brian Campbell, Director of the Bureau of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction*

Mr. Campbell shared some of the changes with PDE reporting to school and ESSA accountability. One point Mr. Campbell made was that teacher should use the Future Ready PA Index information, especially sub group data, to target instruction as a possible way to increase SPP. He also shared that the math for how to calculate SPP is in the law, as that is a question many teachers ask.

### **A. Concurrent Sessions:**

The concurrent sessions I attend could be grouped into two categories: sessions on school improvement/reform (how to look at data) and sessions on teaching English Language Arts. One of the Kiski Area elementary schools' session was on building capacity and getting results through the use of professional learning communities (PLC). At first I thought they were using the term "professional learning communities" to describe ongoing and embedded professional development. That was not the case. At this school, the PLC looks at student data. They have developed common assessments for reading and math and have pacing guides designed to allow their teachers to be assessing the same content, using the same assessment, multiple times a year. After a common assessment has been given and scored, the PLC meets to discuss the results. From those discussions they determine which students needs to be seen in which small group and which students need to be moved to a different group. For me, the biggest takeaways from this session were the need for common assessments and their method for digging deeper and unpacking the standards.

In the other school improvement/reform sessions, the presenters again stressed how they had development common assessments and pacing guides. The pacing guides were not extremely strict, but set so teachers were within one or two weeks from each other. The common assessments allowed the teacher to have discussions and compare students' performances on the assessments, multiple times throughout the year. For some districts, the groups met at least once every six weeks.

The English Language Arts sessions I attended were a combination of both reading focused and writing focused. The session I enjoyed the most was Franklin Regional's on grammar. The focus of the session was that grammar instruction is the most effective when taught in the context of writing workshop, using mentor texts. When examining the standards related to grammar acquisition we noticed that they required

the students to "use" or "demonstrate" knowledge and that there was nothing there related to "find within a group of words the" or "circle the". The presenters shared studies that stated tradition grammar instruction was unlikely to improve students' writing and studies specifically examining impact of grammar instruction with low-achieving writers also yielded *negative* results (Anderson, 1997; Saddler & Graham, 2005).

After attending Franklin Regional's session I attended a session by PaTTAN related to writing. Their presentation focused on micro-level and macro-level of writing. Grammar, along with handwriting, would be considered micro-level where content, organization, and style would be macro-level. The handout listing the micro- and macro-level categories is a resource I plan to hold onto and refer back to when developing lesson and analyzing student work.

One session I attended discussed meaning-centered reading practices and had participants practice finding connecting themes between two seemingly different pieces. This is a task that students are asked to complete on the PSSA. They also shared the strategy Question the Author (QtA) as a way to help facilitate close reading.

Lastly, I presented on the units of study in writing I did when I taught elementary. My session was on the last day of the conference. The purpose of the session was to give teachers, who might not use a workshop setting for teaching writing, the organization system of daily writing workshop and also ideas for units to study throughout the year. My hope was that the teachers who attended the session would begin to emphasize the process of writing more than the product.

## B. Reflection on conference value

This conference had a nice variety of session offerings. With many of the presenters being practicing teachers, they shared ideas that could be easily implemented immediately. As stated above, after attending Kiski Area's session on developing a PLC, I plan on using their system for digging into/unpacking the standards and examining the 8th and 9th grade ELA standards. I was able to network with other professionals and now have contacts in nearby school districts for both resources and professional advice. I would like to thank the School Board and my administrators for allowing me to attend this conference. It is my hope that more Indiana Area teachers will present at this conference next year.

NAME: Jason Olear

POSITION: Senior High Music

CONFERENCE ATTENDED: PMEA District 3 Band Festival

DATE(S): January 23rd to January 25th, 2019

LOCATION: Franklin, PA

On January 23 - 25, I had the privilege of attending the PMEA District 3 Band Festival. The festival was held in the Franklin Area High School in Franklin, PA. Over the two days with almost thirty school districts attending. Indiana Senior High School had three successful musicians audition into one of the PMEA Region II Band Festival. It was an educational and fantastic experience for both students and directors.

The festival contained several opportunities for development of both students and directors over the two day conference. A large amount of insight was gained simply by observing the guest conductors work with the students in the large rehearsals. Dr. Darrin Thorton, a music professor from Penn State University, was on the podium for the course of the festival. The guest conductor filled a folder with music that was both challenging and educational. The folder included the following:

PMEA Salute.....A D Davenport  
The Star Spangled Banner.....arr. Mark Williams  
Sol Y Sombra.....George Gates  
Melodious Thunk.....David Biedenbender  
On a Hymnsong of Philip Bliss.....David R. Holsinger  
Gershwin!.....George Gershwin/Warren Baker  
Prelude, Siciliano, and Rondo.....Sir Malcolm Arnold

Dr. Darrin Thorton worked with the band through several methods. One successful method was modelling through singing or having students model for other students. His approach was successful in attaining correct pitch, rhythms, and style. However, he was really going after the characteristics of the music. For example, *Sol Y Sombra* required a mariachi approach to selected passages. Dr. Thorton discussed several physical as well as mental changes students could make to truly capture the essence of this Spanish march.

Additionally, he had several activities to keep students engaged throughout rehearsals. One involved having each section stand up and introduce themselves (name, school, interesting fact). It made the massive 150+ band feel a little more like the band community that these students have from their home schools. I applauded his efforts to have student network and meet students from across the region. Another was having students lead tuning sessions before each piece. Again this not only was beneficial musically, but also as a band community. I followed up with our students and their impressions of the group and the director. All IHS students seemed very pleased with the ensemble and the director throughout the festival.

Following rehearsals, I was able to sit down with Dr. Thorton to begin a dialogue in regards to the festival and our band program back in Indiana. He was impressed with the festival's percussion section, which included an Indiana student. We further discussed our school, repertoire, and his thoughts on the audition procedure. We eventually got into a discussion regarding the start of an ensemble at the state level. It started a motion to have an all state percussion ensemble. Many directors jumped at the motion and put the thought into motion as both the District 3 president, Dr. Ryan Beeken, and the PMEA president Mrs. Tina Bennett were both in attendance at the director meeting. As a percussionist, I valued Dr. Thorton's input to further the education and opportunities for our percussion students.

Following the director's meeting, we were able to start the audition process for the PMEA Region II Band Festival. I was selected to judge the french horn along with two other colleagues. A policy is in place to not have directors judge students that are in their home ensembles. Therefore, I had the pleasure of judging 17 horn students from across the region. We selected three excerpts for the audition and began hearing auditions later that afternoon. Using the new rubric allowed us to be further aligned with state standards and consistency across all PMEA districts. I found myself wanting to use this or revise it for use back at our high school. So, following auditions I spent some time revising the PMEA rubric to align our high school program with PMEA standards and audition processes.



Overall, the festival and concluding concert were very successful. I hope that our students are afforded the opportunity in the future to attend these types of festivals. They work extremely hard to get into the ensembles and then continue to work hard with other outstanding musicians throughout the area. Furthermore, they work with some of the leading educators in the field. It is great to get this type of learning for both students and directors that we can take back to our programs. I look to share this experience with my fellow music colleagues and certainly with our students at IHS!



Mandy Yanoschick

Reading Specialist

Conference: Enriched Core Reading Instruction (ECRI)

1/9/19 and 1/10/19

PaTTAN Harrisburg

## RESUME:

### Summary

Enhanced Core Reading Instruction (ECRI) is a multi-tiered program for Tiers 1 and 2. It consists of a variety of evidence-based routines that help improve the effectiveness of reading instruction. It is best implemented kindergarten through second grade. Routines can be used in conjunction with core reading programs. The goal of ECRI is to take a core reading program and make it more effective by adding instructional enhancements.

### Reflection

I agree that this model best fits when implemented along with a core reading program. Our Benchmark Literacy program emphasizes heavily on comprehension, and this would be a great component that would increase phonemic awareness and phonics instruction. Each daily routine can be easily implemented within a 20-30 minute ELA block.

The ECRI routines are separated by grade levels and clearly define which foundational skills are best implemented in each grade, as well as what skills should be mastered before moving forward. This layout is clearly defined and easy to understand and follow. Examples of routines include letter naming, irregular word reading, phoneme blending and segmentation, sound spelling and blending.

Students need foundational skills in order to properly comprehend text. ECRI provides deliberate and frequent practice for all students by delivering foundational skills on a daily basis. The routines are predictable and concise. Less time is taken to explain expectations. This in turn increases the amount of time each student participates in the lesson, because students already understand teacher expectations.

I have implemented some of these routines with my first graders. I meet with them every day for a 10 minute phonemic awareness and phonics intervention. My students have quickly learned the expectations, and their time on task has increased due to less time being taken for directions. These students have high needs, and they benefit from the predictability of the lessons. Already, I see the value in these routines and I look forward to learning more.

