

Name: Krista Sevajian
Conference Attended: NISL
Dates: 9/24/18, 9/25/18

Position: Assistant Principal

Location: Edinboro IU

A. Summary of conference sessions attended:

"Principal as Strategic Thinker"

In this unit, we completed the Learning Context Assessment, which explored context of our organization at a deeper level. With such an understanding of context grounded in data and analysis, we could then collaboratively set forth a clear vision of school improvement. Once the vision is agreed on and the strategic intent is set, the principal, with the entire school community, is ready to begin the next step in strategic thinking—namely, matching ways and means with ends. That entire process is the subject of this unit.

We examined over the two days, basic concepts, processes of thinking strategically, and relating frameworks and tools that can assist school leaders in developing action plans to improve student achievement.

During this learning opportunity, the participants looked closely at strategic thinking and the creation of strategies in the business and military contexts, as well as in the education world. This allowed school leaders to learn from enterprises that perform well—for the most part—with strategic thinking, operational planning, and accountability in following up on decisions and actions. Case studies in the military, business, and education worlds taught us to adapt and apply our knowledge to new situations.

Additionally, the cohort of school leaders examined decision-making processes that school leaders need to understand and apply when analyzing complex situations, overcoming barriers, and ensuring the accomplishment of objectives.

B. Reflection on conference value:

After completing this two-day unit, I was able to fully comprehend the need for thinking strategically and making action plans for our school and for our district initiatives. The ability to collaborate with school leaders across the region was invaluable. Given our context and the goal that our school is focusing on which is personalized learning, we became a highlight of the NISL training sessions. Great interest and value is building for personalizing learning opportunities for students, however, this unit demonstrated the need to approach this shift strategically and as a community.

The Action Learning Project is a form of assessment as we learn throughout the course about Strategic Thinking, Standards Aligned Instructional Systems, Promoting the Learning Organization, Coaching for High-Quality Teaching, Teams for Instructional Leadership, Ethical Leadership for Equity, and Driving and Sustaining Change. My Action Learning Project will be Personalized Learning as that aligns to our district and school goal/ initiative.

The Action Learning Project encompasses the following areas:

Overview

- Brief Description
- Start Date
- Project Leader
- Team Members

Context

Vision

Strategic Intent

Strategies

Action Steps

Support

Project Evaluation

Reflection

References

I will continue to update the progress of our school-wide initiative through my summaries of each course that I am attending.

I am thankful and grateful for the opportunity to continue to learn and grow in my field. Thank you for the support to be able to experience the learning opportunities of NISL. I appreciate having guidance and collaborative opportunities to enhance our school's mission and vision to clarify what personalized learning is and how it can and will support student achievement and student progress.

David Sheeran

First Grade Classroom Teacher

See the Sound: Visual Phonics

9/26/2018 - 9/27/2018

ARIN IU 28

A. Summary

Visual Phonics is a multi-sensory approach to teaching reading that links speech sounds to our other senses in a natural progression – mouth movements for each phoneme are mirrored in a hand gesture, and the gesture is reflected in the written Visual Phonics font.

In this training, I learned to identify and produce the Visual Phonics hand prompts and written symbols; incorporated visual phonics into classroom activities; and discussed strategies for teaching visual phonics to at-risk students.

Students in my class who may benefit from this instruction include one student with a speech IEP and three students receiving additional Title 1 small group reading instruction. Both the speech and reading teachers have already been trained, and this opportunity allowed me to “speak the same language” as my colleagues.

B. Reflection

I highly recommend that all teachers working with students building early literacy skills receive this training. The hand gestures are quick to learn and easy to remember as they very closely associate with what the mouth or face are physically doing when producing a letter sound. Connecting the hand gestures, sounds, and fonts requires teachers to identify exactly which sounds (not letters) are required to say a word. This in-depth analysis of individual words also allows the teacher to quickly identify when incorrect sounds are produced and demonstrate the correct production of the necessary sound. I will be able to incorporate Visual Phonics into daily lessons with no interference to regular instruction and without requiring any additional materials. I will also be able to reinforce interventions that are currently being made by Title 1 Reading and Speech teachers that work with my students.

Names Jeanne Mitsko, Lorrie Gallo

Position Junior high ELA teachers

Conference Attended: Word Generation: Enhancing Middle School Literacy

Date: September 20, 2018

Location: PaTTAN, Pittsburgh

This conference began with a discussion of research regarding the current level of vocabulary and discussion in classrooms. With an average of less than two seconds of discussion per hour in most classrooms, and discussion time being the strongest predictor of achievement in high school, it is imperative that we build vocabulary and other language skills by ensuring our students have regular and structured opportunities to practice new words in writing and speech.

Word Generation was presented as a cost-free, structured program that is meant to be used across disciplines. The program has 72 weeks of units which focus on five words per week, fifteen minutes per day, rotating through all core subject classrooms. Through the reading and discussion of relevant articles, students are given regular practice with academic (tier 2) vocabulary. The materials we used today (articles on current issues, middle school level vocabulary lists, applications in all subject areas pertaining to the initial article, use of programs such as Nearpod) would align well with building initiatives.

The presenters gave us several opportunities to practice using the program and to discuss ideas for implementing the program in our district. We felt that the resources and ideas were excellent for our students and would have fit well into our former e-time, but our current schedule does not allow for this time commitment. We plan to share the materials with our colleagues in the hopes that we can find ways to make use of the program in the future. It requires a whole building commitment (possibly district) and time to prepare for implementation. With time and further discussion, we feel that this program can be a useful resource for IJHS.

Name: Amy Kinneer

Position: Teacher

Conference Attended: What Would You Do? Dealing with At-Risk Students Issues

Date: 9/25/18

Location: ARIN IU28

Resume:

A. Summary of conference session attended:

This workshop covered a variety of topics dealing with issues that students who at-risk may face. Topics covered included resiliency, poverty and rural homelessness, at risk youth, and education stability for foster care youth. Each of these topics were presented for 45 minutes. The workshop provided me with the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers from Indiana and other districts.

B. Reflection on conference value:

This workshop is a part of Indiana's Induction Program. I was able to expand my knowledge on the topics listed above (resiliency, poverty and rural homelessness, at risk youth, and education and stability for foster care youth). Overall, it had great value. I learned that poverty and homelessness is very common in our area. I also learned about how to work with students who may be in foster care in my classroom.

Indiana Area School District
Indiana, PA

NAME Katie Smith, Holly Marusa and Carol Kerchensky POSITION School
Counselors

CONFERENCE ATTENDED College Board Fall Counselor Workshop

DATE(S) September 14, 2018 LOCATION Robert Morris University

RESUME:

The College Board and Robert Morris University's Admissions Office sponsored this one-day conference. Cassandra Allen, our local College Board representative facilitated the workshop, reviewing all of the College Board programs and highlighting important changes. A portion of the workshop was spent discussing the PSAT and its relationship to students' performance on the SAT. Updated resources were also provided to counselors relating to the use of Khan Academy for individualized SAT preparation materials.

A large focus of the workshop pertained to changes in the AP Program that will begin next year. Starting in 2019-20, schools will implement new annual processes and have access to new classroom resources and supports. AP Exams will be ordered in the fall (2019) via a new registration and ordering system. There was much discussion/concern among attendees about the difficulties that may present themselves in asking students to commit and pay for their AP Exams at such an early date. We were also given an overview of the new performance dashboard that will be available for all AP students and teachers. Throughout the year, teachers can review class and individual student performance and know, in real time, when students are struggling on the content and skills that they will be tested on the AP exam. Another great new feature that we can share with our students is that they will be able to view their own results and get additional target practice after the lesson has been completed in class. There will also be personal progress checks with AP questions for each unit that will provide feedback to students on the areas that they need to really focus. Even though we are concerned about the early deadline for committing to the test, we feel that these new resources will be a great tool for students looking to reinforce concepts and for extra ways to prepare for their AP exams.

Finally, the updated College Board for Counselors website was reviewed and information was shared regarding the "one-stop" page, filled with a wide range of resources that will assist us as counselors when we administer College Board Programs and in post-secondary advising with students.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to attend this workshop. The material presented was directly relevant to our work as school counselors and provided new tools for us to use with students.

This conference will be information that we share with students as we meet with them throughout the year.