

**School Professional Development Analysis**

**Ron Keller**

**College of Education, Grand Canyon University**

**EAD-523: Developing Professional Capacity**

**Instructor: Dawn Johnson**

**Due date: August 16, 2023**

- **How the professional development program increases the capacity of staff in a way that aligns to the school vision and mission, and promotes data-driven, student-centered learning. Support your response with specific examples.**

The mission statement of the Orinda Union School District is “a learning community that inspires, engages and supports ALL students.” To address those goals, the professional development session that kick started the year for teachers focused on the three tiers in RTI. The definition of RTI falls neatly into one of the primary objectives of the OUSD mission which is “an approach to education that helps identify and support students most at risk for falling behind key learning standards” (Williams, 2022).

One peculiarity at OUSD is that so many students (nearly 85%) consistently achieve at or above grade level in the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). I call it a peculiarity because as the district’s curriculum director has mentioned to me this often makes it difficult for teachers to stop and address students who fall behind since more than a majority are adequately prepared – and do – to keep up with pace of learning in most classrooms. The 15% or so who do struggle need attention that teacher’s aren’t always prepared to give, thus they focus on Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 RTI.

The focus of the professional development session centered on behaviors that were disrupting classes and how to address them. Teachers expressed their concerns that certain misbehaviors were being identified more and more in their classrooms. This is a trend the district has also been committed to addressing since it disrupts the OUSD core mission of

providing engaging and inspiring classrooms. The PD also touched on how to address the behavior issues and what steps to take – in tiered order – should the disruptions escalate.

- **The principal’s roles and actions in terms of the development of the classroom environment and teachers’ instructional abilities.**

It has become apparent that the entire administrative team at Orinda Intermediate School now recognizes the importance of professional development, especially because of the number of first-time teachers it has been hiring. Orinda has typically been a “destination district,” for teachers, but as the school superintendent pointed out in her introduction the days the district received 50 applicants for one job opening are long gone. “We are lucky if we get five people applying for an open position and several teaching jobs have no applicants.” Principal Stacy Wayne has hired two assistant principals who seem committed to new teacher education, and helping veteran teachers grow. The shift of focus reflects the research of many educational scholars who “describe teacher development as ‘arguably the most central function of educational leadership’” (Holland, Winter 2008-2009).

- **The teachers’ roles in the development of the PD program.**

The role that teachers played in this professional development were limited on the middle school level because the focus was training the entire staff on implementing Google Classroom in their lesson planning and the new grading system Aeries across curricula. Elementary school teachers were being trained in the district’s new phonics program by

teachers who had been selected the previous year to test the program in classrooms prior to the district and school board's approval.

- **How the professional development program is aligned to the school's Continuous Improvement Plan. Support your response with 1-2 specific examples.**

One objective of Orinda Intermediate School's CIP is to become more sensitive to the variety of cultures at our schools as well as gaps in student learning post-pandemic. Grading for equity has become the key catch phrase. "Equitable grading involves eliminating the 100-point grade scale and not penalizing students for late work and missed assignments if they can demonstrate subject mastery and even if they must retake tests or redo other assessments along the way" (Alex, 2023). The awareness and importance of the theory was illustrated as teachers prepared their classes in our new Aeries grading system. Many teachers specifically asked for clarity on how to set up their grades to weigh extra in summative and performative assessments, rather than homework, or other "soft-skill" behaviors. Teachers also seem to be shifting to mastery assessments that reflect students total comprehension of the topic rather than handing assignments on time or class participation and the like.

- **How the PD program emphasizes research-based instructional/best practices.**

When the OUSD curriculum director took over last year, the number of students who struggled with phonemic awareness was immediately brought to her attention. She gathered data from a variety of teachers who all reported the trouble with Lucy Caulkins' material and

thus had devised their own strategies to “fill the gaps” in elementary students’ phonics knowledge. That research helped her and her team pinpoint a phonics program the district tested last spring and launched to teachers at all four elementary schools in this current professional development meeting.

- **How research-based/best practices are used for evaluating the PD program.**

Teachers were required to complete a survey following the completion of the most recent professional development sessions. The survey asked teachers to specify which seminars were helpful and why as well as what could be added and/or taken away to make the next professional development day a richer, more meaningful learning experience. Data from the survey will be used to plan our next district-wide professional development day in January 2024.

## References

Alex, P. (2022). Time to Pull the Plug on Traditional Grading? Supporters of mastery-based grading say it could promote equity. *Education Next*. 22(4), 38-43.

Holland, P. (Winter 2008-2009). The principal's role in teacher development. *SRATE Journal*. Vol 17(1). Retrieved on August 13, 2023 from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ948665.pdf>.

Williams, C. (2022, February 8). Get to know the 3 tiers of response to intervention. Center for Student Achievement Solutions. Retrieved on August 13, 2023 from <https://tinyurl.com/2w3tr7mz>.