

Presentation Title (descriptive):

La Salle D.I. Learning Group

Focus: Grades and Subject/Cross-Curricular Topic

9-12

Various Content Areas: English, Social Science, Science, Hospitality, Math, Business, Computers

Sources of Data/Evidence Used to Guide the Inquiry/Professional Learning Cycle

Learning Preferences Surveys, Multiple Intelligence Surveys, Student Reflections, Teacher Reflections, formative assignments

Student Learning/Engagement Need(s)

The goal is to improve students' engagement and literacy skills.

Differentiated Instruction Based on Student Needs

Choice Boards, Tiered Assignments, Assignments linked to Multiple Intelligence Results, Flexible Groupings, Simulations, Graphic Organizers, RAFT assignments, Inside /Outside Circle Discussions, Learning Centers, Assistive Technologies

Educator Learning Needs

We needed more foundational knowledge regarding how instruction could be differentiated; examples of how instruction could be differentiated based on preferences, readiness and environment; examples of differentiation being built in to both the process and the product; different entry points into DI; how to go through the collaborative inquiry process; on-going need in the area of data collection and analysis.

Professional Learning Opportunities

Approximately every six weeks teachers had half-day or full -day release to do some learning, planning and reflecting. Book studies helped to support some of the learning. Board consultants came to the school and did presentations on DI strategies and Assistive Technologies to help deepen understanding. Some members attended conferences and shared learning with the group. Much of the learning occurred when teachers collaborated in designing activities or lessons and then reflected on the results with other members of the group. Some individuals

were able to plan and observe the implementation of the lessons in each other's classrooms.

Resources: *Tools for High-Quality Differentiated Instruction*, *Differentiated Instruction Educator's Package*, *Integrating Differentiated Instruction*, *Understanding by Design*, *Start Where They Are*, *Tuned Out: Engaging the 21st Century Learner*, *Think Literacy*, www.edugains

What School and Board conditions supported the initiative/inquiry?

The Board required a submission of a RAFT proposal so that the group had a clear idea regarding its goals and procedure. Funding was granted based on the number of participants and number of release days required. We could use a portion of the funds to purchase resources. In the last two years an instructional coach has been part of the process. Also, the Board ran a carousel in the fall and is planning on running one in the spring so that schools can share their experiences and results.

The school has provided the group with space and computer access. Administration has covered the cost of lunch for the group that day. Most importantly, time was provided during Professional Development days for the group to share concepts, resources, and high yield strategies.

What are some highlights of the initiative/inquiry? What were the results?

It is clear that this form of professional development transfers to the classroom in a very real and fluid way. Teachers were open to new ideas and taking risks with new strategies in the classroom because they felt supported through the group. The environment was a safe one for individuals to honestly express whether their lessons went as planned or whether their goals were met. Members of the group were eager to share their learning with the rest of the staff and the staff was highly responsive.

According to the data that was collected, primarily through student reflections, engagement improved through the implementation of the DI strategies. Also, teacher reflections indicated that students were more engaged and had a higher rate of completion, as well as improved achievement in formative assessments. This outcome corresponded to the SIP and BIPSA.

Teacher reflections

- Working with this group was "a good reminder that we need to change things up in our lesson delivery to add variety to stimulate students and potentially engage them better in daily lessons."

- "I got some great ideas from listening to my colleagues' experiences and reading the chapters from our book. I also got an opportunity to reflect on my own practice."
- "I found this to be a very positive and supportive environment - as well as motivating."

What did you learn?

Given the opportunity, time and resources, teachers will willingly and energetically engage in self-directed, job-embedded professional learning. This learning clearly transfers into the classroom so that students benefit, not only from the knowledge and instructional practice gained by their teachers, but also from the enthusiasm and energy teachers bring into the classroom as a result of this collaborative process.

The instructional coach is an important part of the process because she helps to support teachers with the implementation. The coach also helps to facilitate the learning and reflection; she also provides resources and support when needed.

Finally, teachers were exemplary role models for students when they took on the role of learner and thereby helped to reinforce the importance of life-long learning. Most students were keen to participate in a project they knew would be shared outside of their own classroom. Perhaps they felt it was more authentic.