

John DeVold

2018-19 Career Development Grant Written Report

Firstly, I want to say thank you for the opportunity to go and attend the PLC Summit in Phoenix, Arizona. I was able to couple my career development grant with the efforts of two other staff members, and spend 3 days getting excellent training for not only myself, but also share that training with two other teachers who joined me at the summit.

Attending this training was a very valuable experience. I gained a great deal of knowledge and informed my planning for building consistent practices within our building. I decided to attend this conference at the suggestion of Mr. O'Brien. I had discussed with him at my self-reflection conference a desire to improve our building practice in providing meaningful professional development for staff members, and to set better school development goals that align with teacher needs and current PLC team directions. I had felt that my past two attempts for school development goal setting were not meaningful for the staff or effective despite using our school summative data, as well as soliciting teacher input and reflection prior to our leadership meeting in June.

My participation in this summit provided me with many new considerations. I was able to get a better understanding about how to go about achieving my vision to align our efforts in articulating our school culture, reviewing and re-establishing a foundational mission and vision for the school, as well as setting our core values to inform our school goals. The summit was a very helpful step in pulling all those core elements of a school into clear picture for me. It allowed me to see of how these components fit together and provided me a bit of a road map for beginning to work on these school elements with my staff.

I attended three separate sessions that focused on the importance of school mission, vision and values. I also attended two session that focused on setting/transforming the school culture. From these learning sessions, I was able to re-evaluate and greatly improve my plan for carrying out the work I had originally discussed with Mr. O'Brien.

I had originally planned to knock out the work, in a short period. Attending the conference provided me with the perspective that the work I am intending to take on will be a marathon and not a sprint. It was this understanding that caused me to re-think my plan to "get-er-dun." Additionally, the information presented helped see the critical importance of the work on mission, vision, and values as it sets the tone for all other work, and community connections. It became evident that I needed to be more deliberate in my approach, so I will set the stage this year for work that I will begin next year.

Of course, this was a PLC summit, so there was naturally a connection of Mission, Vision, and Values to the PLC process. Surprisingly, though, many of the conference sessions focused on the foundation and culture that needs to be worked on for effective PLC teams to exist and thrive. A key learning piece for me was to understand, that while we do have PLC time scheduled into our day, it is not necessarily effective nor even named correctly. Most of the time our teams are coordinating and not collaborating. I learned that by working on establishing a clear school culture and revisiting and aligning our mission, vision, and values can improve the focus and clarify the structure of the PLC times and teams.

In addition, there was excellent instruction about assessment capable learners. That highlighted the need to have effective PLC teams and times that are well structured so teachers are able to build instructional units that provide students with the ability to work with intention and knowledge of what they know and do not know. Improved PLC planning can provide an environment that allows students to make informed choices about their learning, and to have ownership of their learning based on reflection and assessment feedback.

The final session that resonated and drew all of my learning together was a session on High Reliability Schools. I appreciated the idea to set a high bar for staff to achieve, to look critically at the systems that exist within our school and to evaluate their effectiveness, and to get rid of systems and initiatives that distract from our ultimate target. The levels of a high reliable school were discussed and provided me with a clear path for action as I begin to work on aligning our school effort.

We already have a great school with wonderful teachers. The summit was the perfect tool for me as a new administrator to help me understand how all of the components of a high functioning school interact, and the care that must be taken to work at and align them to the benefit of the instruction and the learning done by students. I do know that as I begin the process of articulating and improving our school culture, and reassessing our mission, vision and values that there will be many challenges and difficulties. I also feel that much of the learning that took place for me at this summit will need a refresher as I take a more methodical approach to addressing this work. I definitely gained a better perspective of how long the task I had envisioned will take, and participation at this summit help me a great deal.

My last reflection was the value of having two teachers in attendance. I am so glad I encouraged teachers to consider attending and that there were two who were willing. The conversations that we had while in attendance were purposeful in reflecting on what we have been doing, and what we can do to continue to improve. Their voices and take-a-ways will be valuable for our effort to improve our practice going forward. I receive many excellent ideas from them.

I do not know if this is the type of information that is desired in this written report. I am not even sure I did good job articulating the many things that I gained from my attendance. However, I can say, that I now have a better plan for work I intended to perform. I have a larger view of the work I hope to accomplish, that I did not possess before I attended. I have more confidence to work through something I feel is a difficult challenge. I have knowledge of resources that will help me, as I encounter setbacks that I would not have without attending. I have two teachers who are also on board with the work. It was a valuable learning opportunity for me.

I do not know if I possess enough knowledge to share with others regarding PLC and the foundational components that were highlighted at the summit, but I can speak about the value. Certainly as I continue my work within my building, I will be able to relate the challenges and application of information I gained. I think, though, that I would need to attend something like this again to have a better knowledge to share with others.

I appreciate the opportunity to attend the PLC Summit and grow as an effective leader for my building.

Sean Dush

2/27/19