today’s situation/
HALTED BY HEAVY RESISTANCE

Redesign the day
to include collaborative
and personal planning time

In the last issue, we met Barbara Fetzer, a second-year principal at Jackson School. She was eager to have her teachers work together in collaborative teams, yet she met resistance when she proposed the idea to the faculty. Fetzer engaged the kindergarten teachers in helping her propose that staff collaborate to plan lessons, look at student work, develop student assessments, and so on.

When Fetzer and the kindergarten teachers proposed the idea at a schoolwide faculty meeting, some teachers said using planning time for assigned tasks violated the teachers’ contract. As a result of the meeting, several teachers filed a grievance alleging Fetzer violated the unencumbered planning time clause in the contract. Visible unrest crept through the faculty. Fetzer was devastated and was unsure what steps to take next.

A PRINCIPAL WRITES:

“I feel for Fetzer. Every little change often comes with an uphill battle. I am very clear that Fetzer was not requiring teachers to use their planning time for work she assigned. She was attempting to help them; however, they did not see that. She wants to build a collaborative culture and engage teachers in joint work. As the staff development leader in the school, Fetzer wants to engage her teachers in meaningful professional learning that focuses on teaching and learning. Perhaps she went overboard with the staff meeting, although her intentions were good. I think she should stand firm in the fact that she was not requiring anyone to use personal planning time for teamwork, and she should continue to support teachers who want to work together during their individual planning time.”

A TEACHER WRITES:

“The workday for teachers is so full. There is barely time to breathe. While I appreciate Fetzer’s intention of supporting teachers who want to work together, I know how it feels to be asked to do one more thing. It is overwhelming. Besides, experienced teachers need less time for planning, and usually the newer teachers benefit more from team planning. I am willing to help new teachers be successful. I just do not appreciate the notion that the principal expects teachers to use their planning time for that kind of work. I think the decision about how to use planning time is ultimately the teacher’s.”

A PRINCIPAL WRITES:

“Teachers benefit when they work together. They can build off of each other’s ideas, contribute to the development of their units, and help one another solve problems, all of it saving time over the long run. When there are limitations in the contract about the use of planning time, it might be helpful to create alternative time for teachers to work together within the school day. Perhaps having time for collaboration that does not impact teachers’ planning time will help teachers understand the value of working together. Fetzer’s responsibility is to redesign the school day so that teachers have time on a regular basis within the school day to work in collaborative teams.”

THE CODE COLUMN ENDS

This column marks the end of The Code, yet it does not mean that staff development leaders and providers cannot continue to share the ethical dilemmas they face in their work each day. These dilemmas represent the challenges faced when real change is occurring, when differing values come face-to-face with one another. These are the challenges in the work of staff development leaders and providers that cause us to re-examine our beliefs and values.

To keep the Code of Ethics for Staff Development Leaders and Providers in the forefront of our work, I encourage you to create opportunities in your interactions with other staff development professionals to share the ethical dilemmas you face, to discover the values these dilemmas uncover, and to engage in dialogue about how best to address each dilemma. Engage novice staff development leaders and providers in the dialogue and help them uncover their own values as one way to keep the Code of Ethics alive.