

Vignette 2: Supports and Barriers

The professional learning goal for a New Mexico middle school was to enhance their instructional practices by making certain that five specific behaviors were present in each lesson. The instructional behaviors originated from a list of best practices found on their teacher evaluation protocols. The whole school engaged in a conversation and came to consensus identifying the five behaviors that everyone will focus on in their classroom.

Here's a list of instructional characteristics identified by the faculty

- Students actively engaged
- Students summarize every day
- Lesson goals and objectives are clear
- Students question, defend their thinking, and talk, talk, talk about content
- Collaborative, cooperative learning environment where students are respectful and have ownership of their learning (Bradley, 2015).

Small groups are formed within each grade level to determine how to learn more about each practice and design how it will be brought to life during instruction. An underlying assumption was that this is not a cookie cutter process, and there will be variation across teams and grade levels.

The professional learning design includes video recording of instruction and peer Walk-throughs with feedback. Video recordings are shared within the team, and team members provide feedback to each other. Peer teams also conduct Walk-throughs of the classrooms of other teams or other grade levels. They collect data and also provide feedback. Without overstating the obvious, this process is very public. This process requires trust and collective responsibility. It puts the professional in the center of professional learning; it provides educators an opportunity to decide what instructional practices are most important to them as well as decide how best to learn about and use those practices in their classrooms. It also gives them voice about the structure and purpose of instructional evaluation (Bradley, 2015).

During a faculty meeting, small groups were asked to complete a Force Field analysis which identifies supports and barriers that exist within the school that could hinder or promote accomplishment of the plan. One challenge that emerged was that almost half of the faculty had over 15 years of experience while the other half had seven or less years. The veteran staff were more guarded and private about their classroom practice. They were not comfortable with having anybody—especially peers in their classrooms. The younger, on the other hand, were used to being observed by practically anybody using any method including video. This had been a typical strategy used in their undergraduate years. Their concern was that as professionals they would not be respected or appreciated by their older colleagues.

Given this scenario, what adjustments might you make, what obstacles might you encounter, and what would you do to make this professional learning effective for this faculty?



Jot down a few ideas of how you would address these concerns. When you are ready, watch the next video that will offer some ideas of ways to refine professional learning.