

Vignette 3: All Together

Consider a small, rural county-wide school district, with four schools (1 high school, 1 middle school, 1 elementary school, 1 primary school) and approximately 2,000 students. An Early Learning Center exists but only serves a small number of high-need children. It is funded through the local emergency services agency—it is not supported through the district budget.

The district is economically diverse although the economy is primarily based on agriculture which means the district serves a large geographic. As a result, some students have a 45 minute bus ride each way to school. There are large differences in achievement for different age groups. The surprise is the lowest achievement scores are in the primary grades. Yet, the scores rise continuously through high school; high school scores are strong while not stellar. The district is doing a good job of preparing their students for college and post-graduation jobs. Special needs students and African American students score lowest across the board.

There is very little community participation at the school board level although there is a lot of parental involvement at each of the schools. The schools work in isolation. Even though it is a small community with schools physically close to each other, there is very little interaction between faculty members of different schools. A focus group conducted at the end of the school year with a cross section of educators and administrators revealed an interesting result. A recursive blame-game occurs each year when the state scores are published with everybody pointing their fingers at the grade level below as the cause of the achievement problem.

Data analysis of student achievement led the district to set a goal of continued instructional rigor throughout the district. They had already begun working on Problem Based Learning (PBL) as the primary instructional method within the district and wanted to continue this emphasis for at least another year.

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



Jot down a few idea 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.