

Professional Development Plan from DGS Performance School Proposal

D. Professional Development Plans

The summer before DGS opens DGS will have three professional development priorities, integrating the Earth Force model of service learning with our selected curricula and understanding assessment data and how to use it.

First Focus – Data

In order to open school ready to make the fullest use of data to guide our backward planning and instruction, DGS will conduct a professional book study on *Compelling Conversations* (Piercy 2005). This book presents a model based on conditional knowledge research designed to improve the effectiveness of teaching through the use of data on student learning.

Second Focus – Earth Force Service Learning

DGS will use service learning as a thread through all levels of education, will study the Earth Force model (see PD Plan 2), review the scope and sequence at each grade, and plan the first term of Connections Lab.

Short-term goals (before school opens)

- Choose our structures of collaboration – when and how to work together, from when to meet to how to structure work to support innovation;
- Using pacing and planning documents for the grade levels, document connections between content areas and between levels. These connections will offer entry points for interdisciplinary work, the foundation of our project based/service learning curriculum; and
- Write first term unit plans for Education for Sustainability standards at each level.

Medium term goals (within the first academic term)

- Write an executive summary of the development of topics over years;
- Survey available project based/service learning projects and outcomes at each level looking for a sense of what to expect at each grade level. This will provide a starting point for the iterative refinement of our practice of service learning.

Long-term goals (within the first school year)

- Create a living document of our shared understanding of the development of topics for each year and across years.

Professional Development plan 1: Introduction to Education for Sustainability

Develop a shared understanding of sustainability and education for sustainability administration and faculty, and to produce exemplary units of study that will serve as models of EfS for the school community. In these interactive introductory sessions, we will introduce the Framework for Education for Sustainability (EfS), explore and discuss the rationale, and introduce the

knowledge, skills, attitudes and enduring understandings core to our work. We will also discuss the relevance of the dynamics of systems and change, the commons, natural laws and principles, responsible citizenship and sustainable economics as integral to sustainable systems, and facilitate a dialogue on what can be done with our current resources, and the role of catalytic leadership in the change process. In addition, we will begin to develop awareness of EfS standards and performance indicators, assessments that produce learning, and analyzing student work for evidence of EfS.

Administrative Planning

Develop with administrators a strategic implementation plan for curriculum development and assessment over 1-3 years. Project details to include: goals, timeline, success measures, benchmarks and alignment to faculty and administrator performance assessment instruments. A project liaison should be established on-site to be responsible for coordinating meeting times and faculty communication. Offsite, we will plan and prepare activities for yearlong project.

Professional Development

We will work with the curriculum design team to gain a deeper understanding of applied education for sustainability and begin sustainabilizing content to produce inter-disciplinary units. The group will engage in a more comprehensive examination and application of standards and performance indicators, mapping and alignment, curriculum design methodology including understanding by design/ backward design, assessment types and methods, and a review of exemplary units and student work.

Coaching

A series of one-on-one sessions with curriculum designer to review lesson plans, address mapping and alignment questions and issues, discuss content revisions, provide feedback, and discuss progress to goal.

Review and Reporting

During this time we will aggregate and review data and collection of units to produce a summary and report findings. We will also provide a gap analysis and recommend next steps.

Cloud Commons

Subscription to Cloud Commons gives full access to Cloud's digital library including all units, exemplars, tools, resources, multi-media and wiki for curriculum access, exchange and review.

Professional Development Plan 2: Book Study

Marzano's research synthesis (2003), finds that of the five school level factors that affect student achievement, effective feedback and goals with frequent monitoring are second to only having a guaranteed and viable curriculum. Frequent monitoring of feedback and goals is the foundation of accountability that is student centered.

“The significance of expectation research is that setting academic goals for all students that do not underestimate their potential is important (Marzano 2003.) *Compelling Conversations* is an explicit how-to-book that staff will use to create dialogue with teachers about changing the slope of achievement by affecting each child's learning, one at a time. It provides a road map for educators working with each other on a consistent basis to improve students' learning by addressing the needs of the whole child. As a student centered school, DGS will use this book as a tool to support the process of establishing individual student learning plans, including how to assess, measure and monitor learning goals throughout the school year.

The book includes numerous examples of coaching questions and techniques that apply to DGS. It also includes suggestions of how to create the time needed for reflection and for conversation among colleagues during a busy school day.

All members of the faculty will read *Compelling Conversations* before August 2010. During the two weeks prior to opening the school, DGS will have two or three two hour sessions (one per chapter) to begin a formal book study. More sessions will occur throughout the first semester until staff has processed every chapter as a group. Appendix 5.1 has an agenda for a two hour session and Appendix 5.2 has the 4 A's protocol and process participants will use for the book study.

Professional Development Plan 3: Earth Force Service Learning

Earth Force calls the core process of their service-learning model Community Action and Problem Solving (CAPS)¹. Its relationship with Front Range Earth Force will enable DGS to establish its own CAPS training and support program tailored to the needs of its embedded, 12-year service-learning strand.

In the summer of 2010, DGS and Front Range Earth Force will conduct an introductory CAPS training for all teachers and any other interested staff. Together, participants will examine the 6 steps and envision what each one will look like at DGS. During that first session participants will also begin to plan how DGS will carry out the first step (Community Environmental Inventory) in the first weeks of school. Appendix 5.3 summarizes the 6-step CAPS process and Appendix 5.4 has a sample agenda for the introductory session.

Following the first session, staff will focus on planning the first term of Connections Lab, our interdisciplinary study and service-learning class.

E. Teacher Teams

Collaborations and teams during the first year of school and when school is at capacity

First Year of School

All collaborations resulting from summer PD on data and building curriculum for EFS. It's hard to predict how this will shape up but staff will look to turn this work into three long-term efforts:

School at Full Capacity

- Canning Lab – a study of canning in the sense the sustainability community would understand it (storing something fresh long enough to use it), rather than the education sense (canned curriculum). DGS will analyze students' in-progress service learning projects in the connections framework staff develops before school opens (first short term

¹ <http://www.earthforce.org/section/programs/caps>

goal above). Teachers will investigate ways to package context, data sets, etc. so that they could serve as a direct replacement of similar elements of the adopted curriculum. DGS seeks to avoid interrupting the flow of instruction while creating the most immediate context possible for students.

- Curriculum Alignment – a study of what DGS teaches and how topics connect to and reinforce each other. Teachers will continue to develop and revise cross-curricular units to deepen student learning and to model interdisciplinary investigation and problem solving intended to transfer to the service learning process.
- Data Team – a study both of how students score on tests like CSAP (central to the current definition of achievement) and a longitudinal look at what our students actually do, both during their time with us and after they move on.

Spring Institute:

DGS staff will complete a 3 day professional development by the Cloud Institute in April to develop a shared understanding of sustainability and education for sustainability administration and faculty, and to produce exemplary units of study that will serve as models of EfS for the school community.

Summer Institute:

All staff will complete a week of summer PD to include professional development specific to curriculum design and instructional practices, training on the use of e-portfolios for staff and students, learning environments and Individual Learning Plans. There will be recommended optional days the following weeks for teachers to create and revise unit and lesson plans.

August 9-18:

School year begins for staff. All staff will attend a 3 day retreat at Balarat to include team building, developing school culture and school wide systems. Subsequent days will include, school wide assessment frameworks including the RtI plan, Learning Environments, plans for opening days, lesson planning with teams.

Weekly data analysis and differentiated professional development:

Early dismissal on Friday afternoons will provide a weekly 3 hour session for the following; Peer review and evaluation vertical data teams using the Compelling Conversations model, meet with grade level teams to co-plan, analyze and track student data, and develop unit plans and lesson plans. Staff will participate in differentiated workshops designed around school wide need and individual teacher need as determined through data analysis.

A culture of communication around electronic mail (teachers are encouraged to check their email accounts several times during the day for logistical and clerical communication as well as for more substantive, curriculum-based discussion) will ensure that this weekly workshop is a rich one in which teaching, learning and DGS's mission are at the center.

Monthly Full Day Staff Meeting:

There will be a full PD day each month during which whole staff meetings will take place. Typically, these days will focus on strengthening the DGS community, building shared expectations, and addressing issues of school wide consistency.

School Visits:

DGS will partner with a “sister” school to create an opportunity for a triangular approach to peer review that will include observation, feedback and assessment of teaching and learning between staff at both schools. The schools will collaborate in the design of the protocols, tools and process.

Workshops and Conferences:

Teachers are encouraged to attend conferences or workshops that will directly improve their classroom practices. If teachers identify workshops that they would like to attend, they should present to the partnership about getting approval. Substitute teachers will be used to accommodate teacher attendance at conferences.

Working with Consultants:

Teachers will work regularly with consultants in all curriculum areas to plan units of study, analyze student work, and most importantly, to improve classroom practice. The Lead Partners and Peer Review team will follow up with classroom teachers to ensure that work with consultants is being transferred into classroom practice. Substitute teachers will be used to provide extra coverage to teachers for debriefing and planning.

Informal Observations Including Walk-Throughs:

In accordance with the school’s philosophy that teaching should be visible, celebrated, and examined, and constantly improved, the Lead Partners and Peer Review team will visit classrooms frequently and engage teachers in regular dialogue about instruction, classroom culture and environment. The majority of these visits will not be evaluative; they are designed to enable the instructional leaders to fully understand the strengths of every staff member and support teachers in any areas with which they would like to or need to grow. Teachers will receive informal feedback at least once a month via e mail. Teachers may request an informal observation and feedback at any time.

Teachers as Leaders:

An important element of staff development at DGS will be Lead Teachers who have gained significant skills and knowledge in one or more content areas. These teachers would be able to act as staff developers, working in classrooms to assist in planning, observing or modeling lessons, and providing feedback to classroom teachers. Lead Partners will be used to provide extra coverage to teachers for observing in each other’s classrooms, and for debriefing and planning.

Book Studies:

Using the “Book Study” frameworks, all staff will read books on professional topics together and participate in discussions about them. The shared knowledge gained by the book studies becomes an integral part of our professional development plan. The Partners will choose the books that are

determined to be the focuses of both school wide priorities as well as the needs of the staff. They will be used in a variety of ways by the staff. The practice will serve the content-driven purpose as well as to drive common goals.

System of Feedback:

At DGS, the Peer Review and Evaluation system will provide an ongoing opportunity for feedback between peers in order to define the professional development needs of the staff. On a quarterly basis, lead partners will have one on one Compelling Conversations. Both of these opportunities for feedback will drive the differentiated PD program.

The professional development plan will be evaluated quarterly by the partnership based on school wide data analysis.