Time for Professional Learning Communities

On a recent visit to the website for Learning Forward, formally National Staff Development Council, I found an article from the Indystar.com website concerning plans that Brownsburg Schools, IN have for creating time for teachers to be engaged in Professional Learning Communities.

This short report quoting Dr Jim Snapp, the superintendent, identifies many leadership strategies that can build support for teachers' work in PLCs:

#1 Communicating the importance of teacher collaboration and learning.

Commenting on initial parent response to the idea of a late start or early dismissal one day a week, Snapp suggest," "Right now, all they are thinking about is that their kids could be coming home early. **It is my job to explain the value of this for their children**."

The district is planning five community meetings to share the benefits with the parents and listen to their concerns.

The district has a rumor control spot on its website called Heard it Through the Grapevine. Currently posted is the question, *"Will PLC time for teachers really be once a week for the whole year?".* A short, positive response explaining why includes a link to a PDF with an extensive set of questions and answers that informs readers as to the value of PLCs and the thoroughness of the system's planning process.

#2 Cost/benefit of plan

Since the PLCs will occur on school time, they come at no additional cost to the system.

#3 Responding to parent concerns

Snapp has arranged with the YMCA who provides child care services for there to be no additional charge to parents using their services for the one day a week extra time. The YMCA will also offer a program for parents who need the child care services only on the release days.

Students engaged in extracurricular programs will be able to attend a supervised study session while they await coaches and directors to finish their PLC activities.

#4 Engaging the stakeholders

Snapp is planning to use input from parents at the community meeting to decide whether the PLC time should be at the start or end of the school day and on what day of the week.

Many school leaders can find plans, responses and strategies in Brownsburg's work to assist in promoting your PLC efforts with a board of education and the community.

For another creative approach to creating time for PLCs see an earlier blog from an international school.