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Intentional Inquiry

Vision, Persistence, and Relationships

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By giving students control over their own learning, guided inquiry allows for increased engagement, more autonomy, and deeper learning overall. For the first time, students’ learning goes beyond what the teacher knows, and while it can be uncomfortable for teachers to relinquish control, the engagement and autonomy students show is proof of its worth.—Elementary teacher, Norman Public Schools, Norman, Oklahoma

On the national level, educators have been tirelessly working to shift what is done in schools to match the needs of the postindustrial-era learner. In order for change to take hold, intentionality must be central. The above quote is from a teacher working in a school district that intentionally created a vision and a plan to support change in student learning across the district by providing professional development in inquiry-based learning. Later in this article, the details of their plan are revealed.

Since the mid-nineties, Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) have been contrasting schools that are “stuck” with ones that are “moving.” They determined that moving schools are “learning enriched” and have “motion leaders” who are “change savvy” (p. 10). Fullan (2010) explains that change leaders “demonstrate persistence with flexibility but never stray from the core purpose” (p. 23). Having a core purpose is where the intentionality of change leadership lies.

As Garmston and Wellman (2016) describe, we can focus our change efforts in schools on “things” and “energies” (relationships). They advocate for adaptive change in schools that are able to flexibly adapt to new challenges and structures that surface over time. If relationships remain the same, changing “things” like schedules will only have so much impact. So changing energies may be more important to an adaptive system.

Garmston and Wellman (2016) provide the example of the school librarian as an adaptive change:

Being a quality filter is a form that gave the librarians pride in their work. They now find that they must develop new ways of applying their knowledge and skills and become *teachers* of quality filtering. The deepest transition here is not a change in the *knowledge base* of the librarians but in the *ways that this knowledge is applied* within their *new identities*. (p. 6)

With intentional practices, inquiry can be the change agent for how we develop schools today. “Change savvy” librarians can make a big difference. The following examples around inquiry-based learning show vision, persistence, and relationships. First is an example of how district leaders can work together to create an adaptive change with a focus on student learning. Second is a closer look at an example of a guided inquiry learning team and how their inquiry stance provided a fertile ground for growth and professional development.

INTENTIONALITY AROUND LEARNING: ONE DISTRICT'S VISION

Many school districts today are moving to one-to-one laptop implementation. November (2013) tells the cautionary tale of a superintendent who was seeking to implement a one-to-one computing model and went to other districts only to find “horrible” results. Most examples were implemented quickly and without a vision, resulting in teachers using the same established pedagogy only in digitized format. In these implementation models, the focus was on the device and not on shifting the pedagogy.

Although teachers, students, and parents in Norman, Oklahoma, are anxious for the announcement of what device students will be using in the fall of 2017, district leaders are focused on the vision. Seeing the one-to-one computing as part of their district plan for the year of 2017, in the spring of 2015, the director of media services and instructional technology, Kathryn Lewis, met with the assistant superintendent, Shirley Simmons, and the director of staff development and student achievement, Beth Spears, to consider the impact of this decision on learning. This team met regularly to map a course and determine the pedagogical framework that would correspond with their learning-centered vision. This diverse team drew upon their varied expertise in instructional technology, libraries, leadership, and professional development. They arrived at a vision that students would use information to create new understandings and teachers and librarians would shift away from a traditional transmission model.

Next, the leadership team sought

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out research-based approaches from a variety of disciplines that followed innovative practices for content-area instruction. As a result, Lewis introduced guided inquiry design (Kuhlthau, Maniotes, & Caspari, 2012, 2015) to the team. Referencing the guided inquiry books (Kulthau, Maniotes, & Caspari, 2012, 2015), they determined that guided inquiry design would provide a complete program that teachers could teach and that would guide how students would learn.

They also recognized that guided inquiry design included multiple teaching and student engagement strategies clearly aligned with the teacher effectiveness model in use in the district (Marzano & Toth, 2014). They felt that professional learning for teachers in this approach would not only support learning in the future implementation of increased technology use but would also increase the effectiveness of current pedagogical practice.

The team then moved from the vision into a three-tiered plan. First, the district adopted guided inquiry design, and the author presented an introductory session to all school administrators. Then, over the course of this school year, 100 K–12 educators participated in the three-day Guided Inquiry Design Institute. School-based teams of librarians and teachers attended the professional development days together, building sustainable collaborative teams. The teams each de-

signed a prototype unit.

As of today, Norman Public Schools teams have designed 100 units of K–12 study. Through persistence and high expectations, by the end of this school year, each team will have taught and reflected on that prototype unit. Because of the excitement of the librarians and teachers who participated this year, many more teachers wanted the training, and two more institutes are scheduled for this summer. Each session will increase the district’s capacity to sustain a high level of inquiry-based pedagogy within each school, as well as districtwide, moving closer to attaining their vision of change in pedagogical practices prior to the influx of technology.

Systemwide approaches are perhaps the most sustainable ways to realize change, but that doesn’t indicate that meaningful change cannot happen at the school level. The next example showcases a high-functioning collaborative team when teachers intentionally come together around student learning for inquiry.

INTENTIONALITY WHERE YOU ARE: FLEXIBILITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

Librarians understand how busy everyone is, and so often they wait until a teacher comes to them with a specific information need, an opportunity they pounce on, hoping to increase inquiry



JUNIOR NONFICTION

THE CIVIL WAR

Howell, Sara. **The Civil War: Frontline Soldiers and Their Families** (Frontline Families). Gareth Stevens, 2016. 48p. LB \$31.95. ISBN: 9781482430585. Grades 4-8.

Here is a personal look at the Civil War to help the reader imagine what life was like for the women and children, in addition to the fathers, brothers, and child soldiers. Primary sources, sidebars, photographs, timeline and index provided. Other wars in the series: Afghanistan, American Revolution, Vietnam, World War I, and World War II.

Lanser, Amanda. **The Civil War by the Numbers** (America at War by the Numbers: Edge Books). Capstone, 2016. 32p. LB \$27.32. ISBN: 9781491442921. Grades 3-8. Here is a cleverly assembled take on the Civil War by looking at numerical facts, i.e. “2:1 ratio of Union soldiers to Confederate...” facts about battles, horses lost in battle, women in service. Critical thinking questions are included with a glossary, additional reading, and an index.

Shattuck, Jason (ed). **The Civil War** (Early American History). Rosen: Britannica, 2016. 80p. LB \$30.66. ISBN: 9781680482720. Grades 5-9. With the country divided between their quarrels over the Constitution and their leadership, war resulted. Here is an opportunity for students to learn the background, causes and outcomes. A timeline, glossary, more information, bibliography, and index are given in the back matter.

Shoup, Kate. **Life As a Soldier in the Civil War** (Life as...). Cavendish Square, 2016. 32p. LB \$28.50. ISBN: 9781502610843. Grades 3-5. This look at the Civil War provides brief, but detailed introductory information about the soldiers, the battles, and everyday life. Fact boxes, maps, and photographs give simple answers about the war.

in the school. Even in this seeming randomness, you can generate intentionality.

This is how it began with Anita Cellucci’s team at Westborough High School in Massachusetts, through a trusting collaboration between one teacher and one teacher librarian with one class of 30 students. Now, after four years of persistence, the collaboration has grown into a guided inquiry design team to include all four physical science teachers and every section of the course, reaching all 220 freshmen in the school. The intentionality in this collaboration surfaces in the persistence to revise the unit over time, commitment to equity in programming, and in relationships.

The success is specifically demonstrated in the ways team members support one another and build off of each other’s developing strengths. Rather than one person doing all the work, team members openly and willingly work together to make this unit the best it can be for all students. They liken their collaboration to a baton race. The teachers commented on the collaboration in a recent interview. Marci D’Onofrio, the veteran teacher who was the first to collaborate with Cellucci, claimed, “Communication between all teachers has to be there. That, and a willingness to not know what you are doing and trust that someone is leading you” (personal communication, March 26, 2016). Cellucci, who had the deepest understanding of the guided inquiry design process, was the team leader, but D’Onofrio came in a clear second, as she had also attended the CiSSL Summer Institute on Guided Inquiry Design with Anita in 2014 and previously cotaught this unit for 2 years. Still, D’Onofrio came to the col-

laborative table open to new learning.

A newer member of the team said, “It’s important to remember that there is a method to the process. In the beginning I had to say, I’m following you, and then jump in where I could.” D’Onofrio then added that she had an “advantage of having done this before. I model what happens and then the next period they [the other science teachers] can do it themselves. It’s like a baton race” (personal communication, March 26, 2016). Modeling for each other was something that evolved naturally for this team. Some teachers were more comfortable with different components of the process and the tools, and so, at certain times, they let others lead. To make this work, they had to change some “things” as well. Rather than meet in separate classrooms as traditional classes would, all sections of this course now meet in the library for most of the sessions in the unit. This way, all teachers and the librarian are present for each section. In that time, they share the teaching task and use this opportunity to learn from one another, as an individual teacher models a lesson and the others listen. Then the observers try the lesson in a coteaching scenario. This works especially well to highlight teacher strengths on the team, supporting new members to come onboard the inquiry process and showcase a specific lesson, such as key-word searching, that is critical to the success of the unit. This team intentionally learns from each other, extending their collaboration from a working team to a learning team (Kuhlthau et al., 2012).

Trust was an important quality in their collaborative relationship, playing a huge part in their ultimate and long-term success. They felt that there was “implicit trust,” with one teacher ex-

plaining, “I’m going to follow, I have to trust and learn while we are doing this together.” Another teacher said, “It’s a big part that we work well together. There is trust there. We’ve developed a rapport so that now [a lot of the collaboration] can happen on the fly” (Anonymous quote). The relationships flowed in and out of leading and following, depending on the strength of the teacher.

This team intentionally took an inquiry stance to their own teaching. One teacher described her attitude at trying this new approach: “I had to be like, “OK. I’m going to learn.” (Anonymous quote). When we see the value of each other’s expertise, such as the librarian as the information professional, we can intentionally set up collaborations that present exciting ways to learn from one another and develop our own professional practice.

Some say that unless the system changes, like the example of the district above, it can be a futile effort to try to make changes from the bottom up. But that is not always the case. As was evidenced in the school-based example, intentionality for inquiry-based learning can have a larger impact no matter where you are. All it takes is vision, persistence, and commitment to relationships, and you’ll have teachers glowing as they say things like one of these team members: “I like my job better! A happy teacher makes happy students!”

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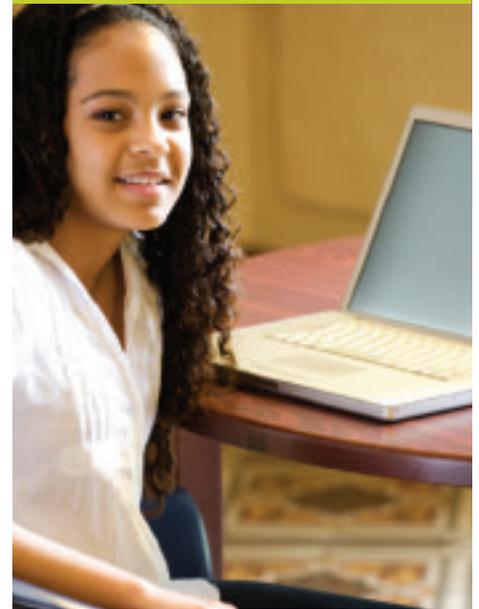
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