

The Technology Professional Development Process at Montefiore Special School

1997

- Montefiore has one computer lab used as a prep provider- equipment was 1983 vintage stand alone computers. No technology professional development provided.
- Professional development for curriculum issues was provided in large group sessions by outside presenters in one-time sessions.
- Teachers were organized in cluster groups to meet weekly to discuss behavior problems and academic issues related to the special needs of the students.

1998

- Oracle's Promise wires part of the building. Provides many classrooms with NCs (Network Computers) and printers for use with students for Internet access.
- Oracle provided group professional development on using the equipment.

1999

- Montefiore becomes part of the Technology Infusion Project (TIP) of the Chicago Public Schools Learning Technologies Department.
- This program provided technology professional development for a group of teachers and a technology coach to work with the school on a regular basis .

2000

- Montefiore wins a technology grant from the state of Illinois.
- The major part of the funds was designated for technology professional development.
- A consultant was hired to help design a program to help teachers implement technology into their curriculum.
- The consultant worked with teachers one on one in their classroom with their students to integrate the technology.
- This program had a major impact on breaking down the teachers resistance to technology that previous programs had not succeeded in doing.

2001

- Montefiore wins a second technology grant from the state.
- Again the focus was on the providing of technology professional development.
- The same consulting firm was hired. A change of personnel provided to the school required a change of the methods used to provide the training.
- Instead of the consultant going into the classroom, the teachers were pulled out to work with the consultant in small groups or one on one.
- The teachers each developed an online project with curriculum connections.
- This project was successful in growing teachers individual skills but later review showed there was far less real integration into the classroom program than those developed within the classroom. We feel this is a major breakthrough.
- Another means of providing professional development that was investigated through this grant was video conferencing.
- The consultant that worked with the school on this project also utilized the in-class model of support.
- Conferences were held with the consultant, between our students and the director of a special program in Milwaukee called HomeBoys and finally between our students and the states attorney in Florida.
- This was a highly successful professional development project.

After a review of the various types of technology professional development utilized between 1997-2002, it was decided that the in class support was by far

the most effective method of technology professional development for Montefiore.

2002

- Montefiore becomes part of a large grant from Beaumont Foundation that provided the school with 50 lap top computers on 2 mobile carts with accompanying LCD projectors and printers.
- However no professional development was provided. The school designed its own support program for the teachers involved in the grant project.
- Two technology specialists were designated as coaches for the classroom teachers.
- The coaches worked in the classroom, team teaching with the classroom teacher.
- The teacher was the curriculum specialist while the coach assisted with the technology.
- This proved to be highly effective in growing the teachers individual technology skills and computers being actively integrated into actual curriculum.
- The teachers involved in this project were grouped into an instruction cluster together and the focus of the cluster meetings began to change to an improvement of instruction and real cooperative and peer interaction between teachers.

2003

- The laptop project is being expanded and the original teachers involved will serve as mentors to the new teachers. In addition a coach will again be meeting with the new classes on a regular basis.

Tips Learned from our Experience

- Professional Development is a process. No change happens overnight.
- Professional Development needs to focus on the classroom and be provided in the classroom.
- Professional Development is the process of improving the quality of instruction provided by the teacher. It is NOT about meetings Think outside the box.
- Professional Development meetings should be about teacher interaction not talking heads. Informational meetings are not professional development.
- Truly effective Professional Development programs grow out of real listening and cooperating between administrators and teachers.
- When beginning new programs it is important to spend a large amount of time laying the groundwork,
- Professional Development should not be limited to the teachers. All staff members in a school should be life long learners and should be provided opportunities to grow their skills.
- Flexibility in job assignments allow staff to learn new skills and helps prevent burnout. When people are in the same job year after year they become less involved and begin to lose interest.
- As life long learners adults in a school should be open to students as instructors. Especially in the area of technology, student knowledge often exceeds teacher comfort levels.

Credits

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