

Closing the Achievement Gap III: Developing a Culture of Collaboration within the School Community

Offered by the Institute for Educational Renewal
in cooperation with John Carroll University

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Spring 2007: Dates: Thursdays: February 1, 15; March 1, 15, 29; April 19
[Saturdays: February 3, 17; March 3, 17, 31; Apr.21]
Time: 3:30 – 7:30 p.m.
[9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.]
Location: Memorial Park Professional Development Center
[Euclid High School]

Course Description: This course is a key component of the partnership between Euclid Schools and the Institute for Educational Renewal. Closing the Achievement Gap III will address the value of collaboration within the school community. Teachers will identify the characteristics of effective leaders and will reflect upon the leadership qualities they themselves possess. Teachers will also examine methods for collaborating with colleagues, parents, and other stakeholders. The course will be guided by principles of adult learning, effective collaboration and professional learning communities, which are essential for creating a culture of collaboration within a school community. In addition, teachers will plan ways in which they may serve as catalysts for effective change throughout the school.

Required Text:

Reframing the Path to School Leadership: A Guide for Teachers and Principals (Bolman & Deal, 2002).

Assigned readings and/or texts from references (Allington & Cunningham, 2002; Bernhardt, 1999; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Eisner, 2002; Evans, 2001; Fullan, Bertani & Quinn, 2004; Garmston & Wellman, 1999; Lambert, 2002; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Mednick, 2003)

Rationale:

Great schools occur when teachers move from working in isolation to collaboration while maintaining an unwavering focus on effective teaching and learning and positive school culture. Long-term excellence is achieved when educators work together in teacher networks, study groups, and action research teams, to address school-wide issues and concerns. “It is essential to move away from what has always been done toward a new reality in which diagnostic practitioners, who have a solid core of beliefs and understandings, develop highly personalized program that match the needs of individual students” (Fullan, 2006).

Collaboration between the principal and teachers develops shared educational leadership and fosters a climate for continuous improvement in student performance and school renewal (Sergiovanni, 2000; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Eaker, DuFour & DuFour, 2002; Lambert, 2002). Consensus about the school's goals and responsibilities and the means for achieving success are shared school-wide. Teachers know and understand the leadership roles they can assume in the school. Together, the school-wide community implements an organized structure for achieving long-term goals of excellence. The development of professional learning communities begins with analysis of individual district and/or school's strengths, needs, structures, and goals and over time, leads to the full realization of sustainable professional learning communities (Senge *et al.*, 2000; Garmston & Wellman, 1995).

Working together as learning communities, faculty engage in reflective practice that encourages the individual to examine his/her own beliefs and practices in continuous cycles of study, observation, analysis, and active experimentation that lead to personal growth and attainment of school-wide goals (Wenger & Synder, 2000).

Knowledge: The teacher/learner will acquire knowledge of:

1. leadership roles that exist within a school, including both formal and informal
2. the characteristics of the adult learner
3. learning communities and how they function at the school level and grade level
4. methods for effectively involving parents and other members of the school community in student learning
5. factors that contribute to meaningful change in schools.

Performance: The teacher/learner will:

1. implement effective strategies for working with adult learners
2. conduct a mini-learning cycle with his/her grade level or school leadership team
3. identify and evaluate leadership style(s) that currently exists in his/her school
4. design and implement an action plan for building collaboration within his/her respective school community

Attitude: The teacher/learner will:

1. recognize his/her ability to effect meaningful change in the classroom and in the school
2. appreciate the value of a collaborative approach to leadership wherein all members of the school community are involved
3. appreciate the value of ongoing professional development that emphasizes openness to new ideas and collaboration with colleagues
4. value becoming a reflective practitioner

Course Outline: This two credit course will consist of 24 classroom hours, with an additional 4-hour follow-up session to share progress of students' action plans. The course will address selected topics including the following:

- Session 1: Defining Leadership
- Session 2: Working with the Adult Learner
- Session 3: Collaborating at Grade Level
- Session 4: Collaborating with Parents and other Stakeholders
- Session 5: Building Leadership within the Building

Session 6: Facilitating Action for Change
Follow-up: Progress toward Goal

Models of Instruction: Observation, personal reflection, discussion, cooperative learning, school-level implementation activities, demonstration, lecture, action planning.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

Requirements:

- Attend class/seminar and participate in class/seminar activities and discussion.
- Observe teachers, principals, and other members of the school community within and across IER schools.
- Work with consultants to implement course content into actual practice at the school and district levels.
- Write reflections on assigned readings and assigned activities.
- Develop and implement an action plan for facilitating school change.

Requirement for students registered for transfer 500 level graduate credit:

- Read and analyze at least three articles on a subject under study in class and prepare a written report.
- Presentation of findings to class

Evaluation: Each student will do a self-evaluation of his/her own professional development. The instructors will respond to assignments with written comments.

Final Grade if taken for workshop 400 level credit:

- Pass – Work demonstrates consistent commitment to course content and classroom implementation activities
- Fail – Work does not demonstrate commitment to course nor knowledge of course content

Final Grade if taken for graduate 500 level credit:

- A – Work demonstrates consistent commitment to course content and classroom implementation activities
- B – Work demonstrates knowledge of course content
- C – Work demonstrates minimal engagement with course content

References:

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