

Beginning Educator Support Team NEWSLETTER

November 2017

PEER OBSERVATION

Teachers observing teachers doesn't seem like a radical idea, but it is at the forefront of a new style of professional learning. In Walla Walla, we pride ourselves on our "open doors" classrooms because observation can be a powerful tool for continual improvement of our teaching practice in the service of student learning.

When done right, non-evaluative peer observations benefit: **teachers** by providing the space for reflective dialogue about their work with someone who knows the daily demands of the classroom; **administrators** by increasing teacher efficacy and a focus on student achievement; **the school** by fostering shared responsibility for students within a collaborative learning community; and **students** by working together to provide equitable learning opportunities for all.

As Stephanie Hirsch says, let's "make teaching a public rather than a private act."



TALKING POINTS

Find time to engage in observation with purpose this month!

Here are some other topics of conversation for mentors and early career teachers:

Successes and challenges

Using curriculum effectively

Student motivation

Engaging students "bell to bell"

Entry/exit routines

Growth goals

Maintaining a work/home life balance, time management strategies

WHY I [TEACH]

"I teach because every single day with my kids is different and it brings me joy."

~ Kasey Humbert, second-year teacher at Sharpstein Elementary



NEED TO KNOW

BEST PLC (first-year teachers)

November 16, 4:00 - 5:30

Green Park Elem., room 213

No School for students

November 10, 23, 24

Ed Tech Trainings

Check in with Carina Stillman for ongoing trainings on Skyward, Google Tools, and more for your classroom!

OSPI Southeastern Regional Mentor Roundtable

November 28, 4:00 - 6:00

SEA-Tech Skills Center

Connecting with Mentors

Find time to connect, reflect, and engage in learning through observation.

BRIGHT IDEAS

While all novice teachers and their mentors will engage in observations of one kind or another (mentor observing teacher, teacher observing mentor, both observing a demo teacher), there are some strategies that can make the time spent in observations count! Here are some tips from the field to make the most of your observations:

FOCUS. Identify and agree on a focus for the observation. It might come from student work or behavior, a previous observation, or a hunch, but focusing your eye results in better clarity around the teaching and learning that's really happening.

TAKE NOTES. Jot notes around your focus using a template. Reflect on your notes and draw interpretations. Record your take-aways and ideas for application. These notes will come in handy and help to sort your thinking.

DISCUSS. Talk about what you saw/experienced following the observation with your trusted colleague or mentor. A good learning-focused dialogue is the best kind of professional development!

REFLECT. Think intentionally about how strategies/behaviors observed might influence future practice. How can the learning be applied in a conscious way?

APPLY. Apply the learning or try something you saw and elicit feedback from your trusted colleague or mentor. Keep the cycle going!



MENTORING SPOTLIGHT



(Upper left: Demo teacher Shannon Ahrens opened her door to several new teachers this month, including Rachel Geiter; Upper right: The Teaching & Learning team represent WWPS at Dia de los Muertos; Lower: Mentors continue to deepen their knowledge and skills around their role to support novice teachers and their students)

Teachers and mentors around the district have been engaged in a variety of observation activities. Recently, Lance Longmire organized a learning walk for first-year Garrison science teacher, Jennifer Golden. They identified a few guiding questions to focus their observational lens, recorded their observations and insights as they visited three different classrooms, then debriefed together. Golden reflected on the impact of seeing experienced teachers take different approaches to a similar challenge and has already implemented some of her learning back in her own classroom. She also notes that she enjoys having others visit her room to observe for the feedback and because "it shows the students that our classroom is a positive place to be and people are curious about the learning we're doing."

A special THANK YOU to all of our **demonstration classroom teachers**, who generously open their doors to support professional learning. ALL students are OUR students!

CONTACT

Comments, questions, or want to know more about supporting early career teachers in Walla Walla?

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