



ON TARGET

A QUARTERLY report by Targeted Leadership Consulting

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Introduction

Dear Colleagues,

The fall edition of our On Target Report looks at how one school district used a professional learning cycle to help close the “knowing-doing gap” (Pfeffer and Sutton, 1999). The La Habra City School District organized a Summer Academy in 2010 that targeted a best practice for students learning and at the same time, incorporated a best practice structure for adult learning. The Summer Academy allowed for a successful experience for both student and teachers.

Following the report is a Tool for Leaders which may help your school or district reflect on how you include each of the elements of the Professional Learning Cycle into your own teacher professional development.

Jeff Nelsen

Consistency and Coherence Support Adult and Student Learning: One District’s Story

*“We’ve had this training before.” “I remember this from several years ago.”
“Here we go again... the same training with a new title.” “What will be different
this time?” Followed by: “Since we already had training in this, then why don’t
we see the implementation of it in more classrooms?”*

Exchanges just like the ones above are often heard about practices that were introduced to staff, but never fully implemented. This might occur for many reasons: unclear expectations, lack of process, or vague reasons around the clarity needed for implementation. This is an example of what is commonly referred to as a “knowing-doing gap” (Pfeffer and Sutton, 1999). If the practice has been established as research-based and effective for student learning, how can the “knowing-doing gap” be closed?

Research by Joyce and Showers (1995) indicates that one-shot training around a particular practice is likely to result in minimal change in application. A structure that provides on-going, multileveled support is more likely to result in a much higher percentage of change. The graph below illustrates this research.

Closing the Knowing-Doing Gap

La Habra City School District, a K-8 district in northern Orange County, California, faced this specific challenge. A professional practice had been introduced to schools but was not taking hold in classrooms across the district. In an effort to remedy this situation, the La Habra City School District organized a Summer Academy in 2010, that targeted a best practice for student learning and at the same time, incorporated a best practice structure for adult learning.

La Habra used the Professional Learning Cycle (see "Lasting Impression: Target-

ed Learning Plan has Maximum Impact on Teacher Practice". JSD, vol. 30 No. 5, December 2009) as a structure to support teacher learning beyond the training that would support the closure of the "knowing-doing gap." This was also designed to achieve the 80-90 percent application of the practice in classrooms, as identified by Joyce and Showers.

1. Training

The targeted best practice was Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) strategies. GLAD is a district-wide initiative that highlights building students academic language through the use

of chants, charts and many visuals. A strong component of GLAD is the many opportunities for students to speak and practice using language with other classmates. Students work in pairs and small groups. They collaborate on projects and complete "Team Tasks."

Certified district trainers highlighted teacher behaviors, student behaviors and the student work to be created using GLAD strategies provided training. As a part of this training, teachers were given time to prepare GLAD units that aligned to the California State English-Language Arts Standards for the grade level they would be teaching. The District Academ-

ic Coaches were there to support the development of the units.

The emphasis on student learning through engagement resulted in minimal behavior issues that summer. Behavioral expectations were captured in three standards:

- Show Respect
- Make Good Choices
- Solve that Problem

Each day, classroom Scouts recognized their classmates for following the three standards. This practice resulted in a shared responsibility between teacher and students for behavior that contributed to learning.

2. Safe Practice

Following training, teachers used the strategies with students in the Summer Academy. Having had coaches' support in the design of the units used and knowing it was new learning for many of their colleagues in the Summer Academy, a low risk environment was established so teachers would be open to trying on these new behaviors. Teachers knew that feedback would be provided only after they'd had some time to practice and explore different ways to have success with the strategies.

3. & 4. Observing Colleagues & Receiving Feedback

After some practice time, the Academic Coaches provided feedback to teachers on the instruction of the GLAD units and provided demonstration lessons as well. Teachers had opportunities to observe and learn from colleagues and discuss the success and/or possible modifications of lessons.

5. Professional Reading

Teachers had opportunities to do professional reading throughout the Summer Academy time. Sections

Relationship of impact on teachers and the types of training components used (Joyce & Showers, 1995)

Training Components	Understand Knowledge & Skills	Learn Skills	Apply Skills in Classroom
Presentation of Theory	85%	15%	5-10%
Modeling	85%	18%	5-10%
Practice and Low Risk Feedback	85%	80%	10-15%
Coaching Feedback and Peer Visits	90%	90%	80-90%



from books such as *Bringing it All Together* by Marcia Brechtel, *Building Background Knowledge* by Robert Marzano, *Comprehension and English Language Learners-25 Oral Reading Strategies that Cross Proficiency Levels* by Michael F. Opitz, and *Transformative Assessment* by W. James Popham. are examples of some of the professional reading that was done to support the understanding of why these GLAD strategies are successful.

6. Monitor, Measure, Modify

Student comments below reflect their take on their Summer Academy experience:

Summer school made my brain work harder, but I got to use drawing and colored pencils to help me learn.

I learned how Story Maps help me label the events and better understand a story.

What I learned this summer is that you need to solve your problem and never give up...keep trying your best.

Many students referenced the value of doing Team Tasks as captured in this reflection.

What helped me learn is the team tasks. It really helped me to cooperate with others.

Other students identified specific strategies that supported their learning, such as, Cognitive Content Dictionary, Cooperative Strip Paragraphs and Chants. Many students, in describing their Summer Academy experience,

used the word "fun".

When asked to identify the observable growth of students' skills, many of the teachers' comments mirrored what students self-identified. Skills such as the use of complete sentences, use of academic vocabulary, and working in teams were some of the areas on which teachers commented.

My students were very quiet in the beginning but became confident rather quickly. Because the students had opportunities to discuss their thoughts with each other, had visual support, and the chance to work in teams, their comprehension skills grew considerably.

Students were more inclined to speak in complete sentences, and students were getting comfortable asking probing questions to their teammates about things they were learning.

7. Closing the Gap

Teachers were asked to make a "commit to try" statement regarding what they would be taking back to their classrooms for the upcoming year. A strong majority of teachers listed several GLAD strategies that they would incorporate into their language arts instruction this year.

In addition, administrators collected data on the implementation of GLAD strategies at their sites three times throughout the 2010-2011 school year. That data was then aggregated, displayed and shared with Instructional Leadership Teams. There was a great increase in the implementation of the use of GLAD strategies.

The organization of Summer Academy 2010 allowed for a successful experience for both students and teachers. Having a targeted focus on the specific research-based strategies of GLAD brought coherence and consistency to everyone's work. Students developed skills in working with others and learned academic vocabulary that has equipped them well for their work in their current grade level. Teachers had the time to develop GLAD units they can incorporate into their current assignment and received specific feedback around the delivery of instruction from which their current students will benefit.

Summer Academy 2010 definitely exemplified La Habra City School District's commitment to "Fostering Excellence in Teaching and Learning."

Identifying Next Steps Based on a Professional Learning Cycle

Professional Learning Component	Notes for Our School
What is the direct training we want our staff to receive?	
What is our expectation for implementation?	
SMART goal for implementation	
How will the SMART goal be communicated?	
What is the professional reading we will have staff do?	
What opportunities will staff have for practice? How will that look?	
How will feedback be given? By whom?	
What opportunities will be given for us to learn from each other? (observation of colleagues)	
What student work or data will let us know this is making supporting student achievement?	
How will we monitor the implementation? (i.e. walkthroughs, vertical articulation)	