Homegrown Professional Development: Identifying and Leveraging Expertise Within the School

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My Background

• Deputy Head for Learning Technology, British School of Jakarta
• Chair-Elect of the Board of Directors, ISTE
  International EdTech Consultant, Speaker, Author

• 15± years of experience
  • Teacher – IT, Informational Literacy, Math, PP, EE
    All grades PreS -> GradS
  • Senior Administrator

• Educational Doctorate in Educational Leadership
• Worked in private schools, international schools, universities

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Let’s agree on some concepts

What is professional development (in an educational context?)

Flavors of professional development

Sources of knowledge…
  …bodies of information…
  …content experts…
  …folks that pretend to know more about our jobs than we do!

Where PD falls in the teacher growth/evaluation spectrum

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Discussion Topic 1

What does Professional Development look like at your school/district/college/organization?

How is it tracked?

Who is responsible for it?

Is it effective?

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1. I will send a teacher to a conference and it will have effect on my staff.

Research, content knowledge, and expertise

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1. I will send a teacher to a conference and it will have effect on my staff.

2. Three days of in-service training at the beginning of the school year will have last effect through the school.

3. I can afford to bring in an expert.

4. A PD Expert will know my staff’s needs and capacities

5. PD documents and materials from past sessions will be read by:
   1. New people
   2. Those who went through the training
Don’t get disheartened because these all have value, but…

…there is a lower cost, more effective alternative to traditional (external) Professional Development.
Have you thought about your staff?

- Trained educators or administrators with:
  - Pedagogic and Curricular Experience
  - Qualifications
  - Interest in growing themselves and the field of teaching
  - Connections to people and resources
  - Knowledge of your school and staff

- They may be:
  - Experienced with a specific tool, technology, or practice
  - A PD trainer (like an ADT or GCE)
  - In the middle of graduate work that can benefit the staff
    - Especially Participatory Action Research
  - Interested in bringing new practices to the school/staff
    - PLNs

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Discussion Topic 2:

Where is there expertise in your school?
How do you identify potential PD expertise?

- Look at CVs/Resumes of existing staff
  - Credentials
  - University education
  - Listed PD
  - Experience
  - …this may be harder than you think

- Talk to your key staff members
  - You know who they are

- Openly solicit interest and expertise…
  - …but be strategic and organized about it

- Put your ear to the ground
You have identified expertise amongst the staff.

Now what?
Things to clarify before using internal people

1. You have to vet and verify knowledge and skill (there is rarely an outside body for this)

2. You must connect the expertise you use with institutional PD goals…
   …and institutional PD goals trump…
   …but these are valued educators in your school that you need to treat with kid gloves

3. You need to have a clear message about purpose for internal PD (i.e. This is an opportunity for staff member to grow as professionals by using leveraging expertise. It is not an administrative role or further managerial function for these people)

4. How will these people be compensated?

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How do you get them to actually do it?
Standard delivery is not usually possible
  - Don’t have time to create or deliver an afternoon or hour long session
  - Don’t have experience presenting to a large group
  - Don’t have material prepared for a large scale presentation

Teacher knowledge is commonly age or content specific
  - i.e. Good for science teachers, grades 3-4, using a specific tool in learning

Internal politics amongst the staff
  - There are relationship issues between teachers that need to be considered
  - Some teachers won’t want to stand out

Teachers need to be teachers first
  - They can’t always be available as a continuous resource
Considerations (cont’d)

• Compensation?
• Recognition?
• Time off?
• Asking the teacher to work after school?
• Resources?
• Ownership of the content?
• How many times can you shear the sheep before it begins to feel skinned?
Discussion Topic 5

What are ways they can deliver this PD?

What do you need to consider when arranging these sessions?
Means of delivery

- One-time after-school session(s)
- Year-long work (bi-weekly, monthly sessions)
- Small group work
- Twitter chats & school hashtags
- Staff meeting presentations
- PD days or training week session
- Brown bag sessions – You should pay for lunch!
- PLNs
Means of delivery (cont’d)

- Teacher mentorship
- Video or screen-capture sessions
- Materials development
- Train the trainer sessions
- Leveraging students
- Connecting/partnering with outside experts….

BE CREATIVE!!!!!
How do you create a legacy of this material?
Maintaining legacy materials (Just some ideas)

- Blog/wiki/twitter
- PD write-up
- Training materials
- Video of sessions
- Screencasts
- Interview with trainer/attendees
- Presenter outlines
- Attendee notes
- Transcriptions
- Links to external materials
- …again, be creative!

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You do need to cover these issues

1. Creating a record of training that can be accessed by:
   1. Attendees
   2. New staff
   3. Administrators evaluating future PD sessions

2. Recognize and honor the hard work of the internal trainer

3. Make EVERYTHING accessible and transparent to the entire school community
   1. And others outside?

4. Find it a way to not sit on the shelf
   1. Interactive? Easter eggs? Required reading?

5. Tie this your internal PD ethos and a commitment to growing your staff professionally (as attendees and presenters)
1. Articulate and measure your institution’s ethos and practices around professional development.

2. Identify sources of professional development within the existing staff (and document them)

3. Have a way to vet staff’s depth of knowledge and the value of the subjects they can offer

4. Create clear links between expertise you leverage and your professional development goals

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Key takeaways (cont’d)

5. Have several ways for staff to deliver PD that doesn’t impede their primary responsibilities and draws upon their internal connections

6. Find ways to compensate the staff and encourage greater participation

7. Create legacy materials and resources

8. Leverage your professional networks (internal and external) to build your capacities