

Personal Vision

My personal vision is that all students in my school are successful and proficient readers who are passionate about reading and have teachers who are equally as passionate.

Focus and Clarity

Recently my school completed a middle of year reading assessment on all students to determine what level of support each student required. The results of this screener informed us that 49% of our students are reading significantly below grade level and need intensive support to reach grade level proficiency. As a low-performing school this is often what we see. However, knowing that half of the students we are teaching every day are considered struggling readers and may require years to catch up to their peers, is just appalling to me. My school has to start making some drastic school-wide changes that address this systemic issue. Without making changes, we will just continue to graduate students on to middle school who will most likely continue to struggle as readers. Additionally, reading ability can eventually impact proficiency in other subjects as well and can also lead many students to drop out of school altogether.

Being a proficient reader in the 21st century encompasses so many skills that are clearly lacking in many of the students in my school. In my vision for proficiency for my students, they are not only able to read texts at the appropriate grade level, but they are also able to understand them so thoroughly that they can have in-depth conversations that include higher order thinking skills and can write eloquently about what they read as well. The grade level texts are complex, rigorous, and span multiple genres and text structures. To achieve this vision requires that teachers are effective and knowledgeable reading teachers and can instill a passion for reading in

their students. These teachers need to be readers who can comprehend complex texts as well and are aware of the strategies readers need be successful. They have to understand how to develop this level of thinking and passion in every student, regardless of background or ability level.

The implementation of this vision begins with a school wide activity called Past, Present, and Future. The first question for the group to answer would be: What kind of readers are our students now? The second part of the activity would be to answer the question: What kind of readers were our students in the past? And the final part of the activity would be: What kind of readers do you want our students to be in the future? From this activity, we discuss the changes of students and teaching that has already occurred over time and end with a dialogue about where we want them to be and what skills and strategies they need to get there. I would take Senge's suggestion of "holding three meetings" to be able to work through this process. The final stage of the activity would involve us creating some action steps that we would need to take to achieve the final vision for our students as readers. Hopefully through this team learning activity, "people will learn how to think together" so that we can change our assumptions about teaching and learning in our school.

The next stage of implementation will be to share the school's current reading data as well as additional data on our students from previous testing periods and years. Hopefully this will motivate them even more to learn new and different approaches to teaching reading so that our students can not only catch up but become the skilled readers they need to be to be successful in their future.

The final stage of implementation will involve extensive professional development designed and delivered by myself as well as by outside agencies and consultants. A school-wide professional development plan will need to be created for at least one school year and then

revisited at the end based on teacher input and student data. This will be a critical component to address the change that is needed and will require the most focus, energy, and time.

Scope and Complexity

The scope of my vision is extremely great but has enormous potential to improve students as readers and to improve the knowledge and skills of teachers. Although to address my vision, there will need to be drastic changes in teaching and curriculum which can be the most challenging components in schools to change (Evans, 1996). The professional development needed and the follow-up and monitoring of the new strategies, skills, and knowledge teachers learn is going to be very complex.

To design and develop professional development will begin with either a needs assessment or a general pre-assessment on content knowledge. This information will then be used to craft the trainings based on what teachers say the need and want or based on the gaps in content knowledge. Once the topics are determined, a pacing calendar with timelines will need to be created that include dates for the initial training, dates and time frames that detail the amount of time teachers have to practice with feedback, support, and coaching, and dates for differentiated additional sessions. It will be beneficial to create a rough multi-year professional development plan to outline and prioritize the various topics to be addressed as it will be too much to attempt to implement all changes in one school year. The additional plans can just be drafts that can be modified based on the results and feedback from the initial year. These plans can and should be shared with district support personnel so they can offer their own support and suggestions from a larger perspective. Modifications for teacher turn-over will need to be considered and addressed in the plans since this is a factor that is often overlooked and creates timelines to be extended. Therefore, anticipating how the changes can be long lasting even when many trained teachers

leave and new untrained teachers are hired. So, creating teacher leaders and teachers who can train and be models for others will be something that would be wise to include.

Desirability

Making this change desirable is going to be challenging. It is going to require a lot of work and “unlearning” which many teachers may resist (Evans, 1996). Determining what teachers need and what kind of support they want by asking them through surveys and coaching conversations will help me to make the trainings and changes in their practice more desirable and motivating. By allowing them to have a voice in the topics and sessions they will be required to attend will hopefully help them be more invested in the vision and adopt it for themselves as well. An additional idea to elicit desirability could be to immerse them in an experience where they can hear and see a student who is able to read with the skills described above so that they can make a real-life connection to the changes being asked of them. This experience will also provide an example of the goal we are trying to achieve with our students and they may recognize it as more challenging, yet more necessary and motivating to develop in their students. Eventually, helping them see and understand that by learning new skills and ideas, they are addressing the current issue of having so many students reading below grade level and having to constantly start over year after year with a new set of unprepared students.

Feasibility

From a coaching perspective, to ensure feasibility of this change I will focus on providing support and allowing teachers the freedom and time to practice without evaluation and threat of critique (Evans, 1996). Clearly communicating my role and purpose in the vision will hopefully provide the security they need to try out their new learning in their own way and at their own pace. Keeping in mind that like our students, I have to differentiate my support to meet each

teacher where they are in their learning progression and know when to push and when to pull back. Another component to address in feasibility will be to be an active participant myself in the change process. If the goal is to help all students become readers of rigorous and complex texts, I will need to use my knowledge and skills to work with students as well and not just leave the ‘fixing’ to the teachers alone. Hopefully this will address both feasibility and desirability. Finally, as stated earlier, it will be critical to create a realistic professional development plan that will not overwhelm teachers and prevent them the appropriate time to struggle with implementation and receive needed support. If this plan is not carefully thought through and even presented to teachers for feedback and input prior to implementation, it may fall short and create more teacher turn-over or even negatively impact teaching and learning due to frustrations and stressful conditions.

References

- Evans, R. (1996). *The human side of school change: reform, resistance, and the real-life problems of innovation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Senge, P. M. (2012). *Schools that learn: a fifth discipline fieldbook for educators, parents, and everyone who cares about education*. New York: Crown Business.