

Unfreezing

Unfreezing the team of teachers that will work together to improve minority enrollment in advanced science courses will require a unique perspective. If the science department at my school agrees that working towards this change is feasible because it responds to a perceived need in a practical way, they will be able to move through the dimensions of change more easily (Evans, 1996, ps. 80). Race and culture are sensitive issues and must be addressed in a climate of psychological safety if the “disconfirmation” of original assumptions is to occur. For teachers to become less than satisfied with current practices and outcomes, or “disconfirmed”, they will need to reexamine how they can influence students to enroll in advanced science classes (Evans 1996, p. 60). Addressing the diversity of in our advanced science classes is an opportunity for us to illustrate our commitment to helping all students find rigorous academic success at our school.

To begin the process of unfreezing I will reduce the fear of trying by expanding the fear of not trying (Evans, 1996, p. 56). Teachers have a passion for both their students and what they teach. Increasing the enrollment may also expand the opportunities to teach those classes. Helping teachers along this path requires actively listening and constructive disagreement (November Learning, 2013). I want to avoid a “deficit perspective” (Senge 2012, p. 41) where the teachers are led to believe that they have failed. Rather, I want teachers see that they can broaden existing practices to increase the enrollment of Black students. Broadening practices provides additional opportunities to teachers while addressing the social justice issues of students

Moving from loss to commitment

Teaching is personal, response to change is personal, therefore the response to loss should be personal as well. As teachers move from loss to commitment it will be important for me to recognize that I am asking them to change beloved programs and conceptualize different

modes of teaching. In the past, this department has successfully met the demand for high advanced placement scores. Many of the students I am asking these teachers to recruit have never taken an advanced science class and teachers may not be prepared to provide support to these students while preparing all students for exams. Teachers will grieve the loss of the successful classroom dynamics and as a change agent, I must allow opportunity and time to grieve.

Moving from old competence to new competence

To help teachers build a new competence I will arrange for our staff development days to be used for Pre-AP and AP STEM Access trainings from the Collegeboard (The Collegeboard, 2018). Part of this training will include the dissemination of “ready to go” lessons that require minimal preparation on behalf of the teacher. Teachers will be given time to deconstruct these lessons to identify components that could be added to existing lessons. Using a program already written and tested by the Collegeboard will ensure that it is both credible and coherent (Evans, 1996, p. 64). To maintain continuity in training I will solicit feedback from teachers on what is working, what isn’t working, and what needs are not being met will be collected regularly.

Building a new competence an examination of basic assumptions (Evans, 1996, p. 65). Opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions about lessons and best practices will allow teachers to explore assumptions in extensive, meaningful and interactive ways that encourage the construction of new, enduring, classroom practices (Evans, 1996, p. 66). Without an examination of mental models, the ability of teachers to change is limited (Senge, 2012, p. 100)

Moving from confusion to coherence

Where am I going to find the time to recruit? To provide additional support to students? Will I be penalized if they do poorly? These are some of the teachers’ uncertainties. “Change

agents must help faculty to resolve such uncertainty, to move from confusion to coherence, to a new clarity in structure and function and in roles and relationships” (Evans, 1996, p. 66). I will provide sample letters for recruiting, coverage during teaching time for teachers to speak to students, and secure a promise from administration regarding student success and teacher evaluations. Since we are working together to increase diversity within our advanced science classes, together, we will decide how to evaluate progress.

Moving from conflict to consensus

Active commitment to this vision is necessary for it to succeed and endure (Evans, 1996, p. 58). Teachers who are satisfied with their programs may engage in conflict and resistance but they can be encouraged, through alignment, to move the vision forward. Alignment is “arranging a group of scattered elements so they function as a whole, by orienting them all to a common awareness of each other, their purpose, and their current reality” (Senge, 2012, p. 116). Even individuals continue to disagree will work to move the system in a common direction if they are in alignment (Senge, 2012, p. 116).

The lead teachers for biology, chemistry, environmental science, and physics are the critical mass who can encourage progress. The pressure to maintain a certain number of advanced science classes for each teacher is great. Even for the teacher who feels it is not his or her concern if a student desires to be in an advanced science class, having enough students to offer those classes is a concern. In this way, alignment can occur without immediate consensus and this innovation, with the right amount of pressure and support, will be successful (Evans, 1996, p. 72).

References

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