Title of Session: Teaching Teachers
Moderator: Dianne Allen
Title of File: 20090507teachingteachers
Date: May 7, 2009

Room: Teaching Teachers Group

DianneA: some question to ask?

GordonP: I have done a lot of thinking of how to make Professional development work better

DianneA listens

SusanR joined the room.

BjB waves hi to Sue

SusanR: excuse while I grab some tea

GordonP: I have realized since we use Powerpoint, we move from the student directed learning back to teacher directed.

DianneA nods to Gordon

GordonP: so preparation must be so much greater to be ready to go where the "students" take it.

DianneA nods to Gordon ... yes and no ..

DianneA: depends on what you mean by preparation

DianneA: for instance, if I am working with adults, and where I know they prefer to be open to anything and everything

GordonP: with a standard PD, the method follows one route

DianneA: then my preparation which deals with my tendency to want to be organised, is to set my agenda to 'having no agenda'

DianneA: Gordon, can we back up a bit for Susan's benefit ...

GordonP: yes

DianneA: Susan, Bj and Jeff ...

DianneA: Gordon and I had a conversation .. oh, about 4-5 months ago ...

BjB . o O (a brilliant conversation, I should add)

DianneA: where Gordon was sharing what he was trying to do to make adult education 'work' ... am I on track Gordon?

GordonP: yes, professional development did not seem to work

DianneA: right ...

DianneA: and we were examining why the 'old model' of 'expert telling' did not work

DianneA: and what a better model might be .. like drawing on the adults' experience

DianneA: and perhaps helping them identify their real PD needs ...

DianneA: and then move into a coaching/ mentoring supported research for them to meet their own needs

DianneA: is that how you were understanding what I was saying Gordon?

GordonP: yes

DianneA: Ok... then I left you to 'suck it and see' ... to find out if this proposal worked for you

DianneA: have you tried it with one of your new groups?

GordonP: LOL

DianneA: I also have a 'position' about learning to change ...

GordonP: I have tried it with one group but not enough different

DianneA: that notes that learning to change is complex, difficult and takes time ...

DianneA: and is even harder when the teacher is not ready for the change proposed

DianneA: so I am not necessarily expecting Gordon to 'give me good news' today ...

DianneA: but I would be interested to hear what he has done with our previous conversation ...

DianneA: and if he hasn't been able to do anything, what is preventing him

GordonP: OK I have looked at the standard presentation and realized I do have to make it open.

DianneA: OK Gordon elaborate a bit for us ...

DianneA: what was the group?

DianneA: is it the group that wasn't different, or the try that wasn't different enough?

GordonP: The PD I present is on Benchmark Standards in Adult Education

DianneA nods .. that might be hardish to tweak my way ...

GordonP: There is a standard PPT of about 50 slides

DianneA nods

DianneA: hence your remarks about PPT being teacher directed?

GordonP: I am considering reducing that to maybe 10 and use a overhead projector to be open to different routes of the teachers

GordonP: even dry erase markers

DianneA: you can always give them the PPT as a handout as a resource ... and start somewhere else ...

DianneA: anyone else any suggestions about 'breaking out of the box'

GordonP: that is also an idea, but I fear the default will become the PPT

DianneA: what did you have in mind with the dry erase markers?

BjB: have the teachers build the bridge between the smaller number of ppts

BjB . o O (what do we need to take us from point a to point b)

GordonP: asking questions and let the teachers build the route

DianneA: Gordon, do you have the PPTs available on the computer you are working with now?

GordonP: a leading question would take us from A to B

GordonP: I do not, I left if on a flash drive at work

DianneA: OK .. just a thought .. thought we might be able to load one to the whiteboard and brainstorm

GordonP: that was an excellent idea; I am as bad as my teachers...

DianneA: can I ask again, because I am not sure about what you meant ... what did you have in mind with the dry erase markers?

GordonP: kind of using bread crumbs to build a route to a wanted destination

DianneA: aren't you still leading ... ?

GordonP: and the destination would still be somewhat open

GordonP: right, I would still be a little bit leading

DianneA: in what way would the destination still be open?

GordonP: the teachers would be designing the route and ultimately there would be some learning lessons, but the destination would more likely be a place I had not been before

DianneA: Ok, so let me see if I understand what you are about ...

GordonP: I am under some constraints as to helping the teachers to learn the assets of using benchmark content standards

DianneA: for this particular PD for teachers you have to deal with benchmark content standards ...

DianneA: and because they need to be able to do this ...

DianneA: for themselves and their teaching subject and for certification say?

GordonP: yes, we teach the GED to students but also can help our students get into college without needing developmental classes

DianneA: Ok give me a bit more detail about what is involved in one benchmark content standard

GordonP: OK, the math standards. there are many in math and with each benchmark the student should be able to master and build upon

GordonP: simple ones would be for fractions

DianneA nods keep going

GordonP: more complex uses word problems comparing fractions and percentages

GordonP: then it may go to interest in money problems

DianneA: so what does the teacher need to be able to do to comply with the Benchmark Content Standard

GordonP: 1. learn to use them 2. believe the student can learn in a more orderly fashion

DianneA: and what does a student need to be able to do to show that they can reach a benchmark content standard?

GordonP: 3. not only get the student a GED, but help them get into credit bearing college classes

GordonP: mastery

DianneA: whoops ... I am having difficulties again ...

DianneA: and I think part of the problem is about levels of activity ...

DianneA: let me try and explain where my thinking is coming from ...

DianneA: for me, for a student to be able to show competence at a Benchmark content standard relating to fractions ...

DianneA: they should be able to demonstrate a fraction, ...

DianneA: then use fractions in calculations properly to get correct answers ...

DianneA: and then apply the idea of fractions and the way to use them properly in calculations in some practical situation ... say percentages for interest payments

DianneA: am I on the right track for the students and them meeting some Benchmark Content Standard ... which allows them to progress to further education, because they are prepared?

GordonP: yes, build competence and make for an eagerness to learn more

GordonP: preparation is a key

DianneA: right that is one task, the task the student needs to be able to do successfully ...

DianneA: now for the teacher to work with a Benchmark Content Standard the task is different ..

GordonP: most of our students believe they are stupid because they at some time dropped out of school

DianneA: I am making a distinction between 'work with a Benchmark Content Standard' and 'teach to a BCS'

DianneA: yes and your GED students are not stupid ..

DianneA: they just don't know how to express what they know in usual teaching and math terms .. maybe

GordonP: many reasons

GordonP: none of them true

DianneA: OK back to our teachers' problem, and the issue of PD for the teachers ...

DianneA: are the BCS stipulated or do the teachers have discretion to design them?

GordonP: they are stipulated, but the order is open

DianneA: Ok what are you trying to do, in dealing with BCS at the PD sessions?

GordonP: the standard pd uses a historical aspect, delves into the state gov's wishes and finally gets into terminology and uses

DianneA: Ok so it is a bit like theoretical background, show and tell ...

GordonP: it is a 6 hour training with a 3 hour follow up

DianneA nods

GordonP: yes

GordonP: the follow up is to be four to six weeks later

DianneA: but if they were really keen on needing to know this they could find that info quickly by reading your 50 PPTs

GordonP: yes they could, but there is a need to find the desire to change what the teacher does

DianneA: right, so we are wasting the 6 hours you have, and the 4-6 weeks gap ... before the final session

GordonP: that is what had been happening, now to make it work

DianneA: and giving them nothing they might find useful to their on-the-ground work problem about delivering teaching that helps them help students reach BCS and progress

GordonP: the student knows when they are making gains. With gains, progress and retention are increased

DianneA: How brave do you feel Gordon?

GordonP: Brave, I have learned I have no job security beyond the next year and often it is shorter

DianneA: so how brave do you feel Gordon?

GordonP: there is no easy street

DianneA nods

GordonP: I do not want to waste the teachers time

DianneA: but they get paid for it anyway?

GordonP: yes

DianneA: who do you have to satisfy that what you are doing meets what is needed?

GordonP: me

DianneA: only you?

GordonP: well, I am paid by a consortium in West Texas for PD

BjB: do you hand out evaluation forms at the end of the inservice, Gordon?

GordonP: yes, evaluations

BjB . o O (and ask for suggestions to improve)

GordonP: I have developed a tough skin

BjB smiles. Good for you!

DianneA raises eyebrows .. That can mean lots of different things Gordon ...

GordonP: My ultimate responsibility is to the student

GordonP: and to find a better way to present a PD would be a great feather in the hat

DianneA: OK ... I need some time to process this, and to be able to make some suggestions of what else you might be able to do to move the process from your chalk and talk .. to a learning design that lets the teachers do some more of the really important intellectual work

DianneA: and we are drawing to the end of today's session

DianneA: Gordon, do you still have my email address?

GordonP: yes I do

DianneA: can you send me your 50 PPTs, please?

GordonP: I will. It was made by others and I am to make it work for me

DianneA: what I have in mind is setting a question and suggesting breakout groups and in-session work, followed by between session work and reporting back

DianneA: and moving from 'theory' and 'history' to building one example of how-I-can-do-it, and each participant working in a different area and sharing and reporting back

GordonP: That is what I am thinking of. In west Texas, it costs co-ops up to $3000 to bring teachers together for a PD. Distance learning will be the best way to do the follow-up

DianneA: Ok, thanks all for being here today .. and for the working with teachers PD

GordonP: Thank you Dianne

BjB: Thanks, Gordon and Dianne!

DianneA: come back in a month's time for the next exciting episode!

GordonP: Bye, BJ

SusanR . o O (smiles)

BjB waves goodnight

SusanR waves

GordonP: Bye Susan