Department PD Ideas

* **Let’s do math.** Maybe one teacher every week can be responsible to bring in a math problem to share with the department. We could work on the problem individually, then in groups, and then share out ideas. The teacher who brought the problem could facilitate the discussion. This could help us share good problems and model what we want in our classrooms. Also, doing math is really fun and relaxing for most of us! This could take 15-20 minutes max.
* **Let’s share tasks/worksheets**. In subject area groups, everyone could bring in one task that is relevant to what we are teaching at that moment. Not everyone will be in the same place, but that’s ok. Everyone in the group can do each task and give positive feedback followed by constructive feedback. I think this is more meaningful than just looking in the dropbox because sometimes it’s not clear what the pedagogical purpose of a task is until you actually do it. It also gives us feedback about what we could do better.
* **Let’s do instructional rounds.** In order to grow, we need to see each other in action. Instructional rounds are when we all visit each other’s classrooms in small groups during our conference periods and then debrief during PD. Instructional rounds are **not** to give constructive feedback to the observed teacher, but rather to discuss and celebrate the best practices observed in that class. This is different from classroom observations, which are more towards the purpose of providing feedback to the observed teacher. There is place for that, but that is more of an evaluative process that we don’t need to focus on for PD.
* **Let’s present stuff to each other.** I know I have a lot to share from various experiences I’ve had, and I’m sure everyone else does too. We could have a sign-up sheet where every teacher can sign up for a topic to discuss. Every week we could go down the list and give a different person 15-20 min max to share an issue they think is important with the rest of us. I think this would help give more of a voice to more people in the department about their needs, concerns, or just to share cool ideas that they’ve come across.
* **Let’s recognize each other’s strengths.** In the Social Work profession, there is a strong sense of strengths-based community. As teachers, we could greatly benefit from this. Caroline, my fiancée, worked at a domestic violence shelter in which traumatized women and children were taught to understand, value, and nourish the strengths within themselves. The staff took part in this, creating a positive and reaffirming professional atmosphere. This is something that we can benefit from. I have been working on some short activities we could use to start building a strengths-based infrastructure. It could start as simply as evaluating our own strengths and sharing those strengths with others in small groups for 10-15 minutes max.

Academy PD Ideas

* **Let’s discuss shared students.** I think we should dedicate some small amount of time to discuss some of our shared students with each other so that we can reach some of our kids who have academic issues (grades, attendance, etc.). Maybe if we talk to each other, we could have each other’s backs when we talk to a student (“Jose, I talked to your other teachers and we all noticed\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. What’s going on? How can we get you back on track?”)
* **Let’s read and discuss research.** I think academies would be a great place to discuss current research going on in our profession and discuss what we think was useful and what we think is wrong/not useful.
* **Let’s analyze and critique teaching strategies through video.** There are a ton of resources online that allow us to learn more about teaching by discussing videos. TeachingChannel.com is one example.
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