

TRANSCRIPT

Designing Teacher-Led Professional Learning

November 4, 2017

BOB MONTGOMERY

We are very excited to have a group of committed folks who are interested in teacher-led professional learning—and we use the phrase “Next Generation Professional Learning” as well—but one of the things we are particularly excited about is talking with you today and having you do some thinking around what a teacher led-professional learning experience could look like, and we’ll introduce some criteria and some principles and let you model a little bit in your small groups.

So, that’s the goal of today, is to give you a little framing around Next Generation Professional Learning; to allow you to have a design activity where you’re going to design a teacher-led professional learning experience—either by yourself or with a partner, totally up to you. You’re going to share that with another partner or another pair and then we’re going to reflect a little bit back on kind of what came out of that in the form of a discussion at the end.

So, last year, a teacher from Hamilton High in the Chandler District shared a few things with me on her experience in the SAAL professional learning experience—which was a formal assessment experience where teachers participated in video study groups where they filmed themselves after having gone through a long course, FAI—they filmed themselves teaching formal assessment strategies and their students responding to those strategies. And I just want to share something she shared with me, and I think it will help us frame our thinking around Next Generation Professional Learning.

So, this is what she said: “I think sometimes we get comfortable with what we’re doing and see change as something that will be more overwhelming than it will be rewarding. Personally, every time I’ve taken a leap, it has made me such a better teacher, and in the end, I was so glad I took the risk rather than staying in the safe zone. I also like to challenge myself to learn/do new things so that I can remember what it is like to be a student.”

So, the connection between student learning and adult learning is really profound, especially when we’re trying to figure out this unknown future for students. And so, for us as adults, we have to reassume our role as learners in order to have experiences that we can understand and then design for our students.

Yesterday, the leaders who participated in Sujata’s session—Sujata’s here, she was one of our presenters yesterday—were asked to, using their phone, the app called Slideout, respond to the prompt: What traits do the two learning experiences have in common? They had just gone through a really brief exchange with a partner where they had to describe a professional...a profound learning experience as an adult where they had to describe in a minute, they had to describe a learning experience in their professional context.

So, in a minute they did a sharing and their partner drew what they heard and they took turns, and these are some of the terms that were collected through their phones—56 people’s phones—and look at “discomfort,” look at “authentic.” So we thought that would reinforce a little of what we think.

So, putting learners at the center. As soon as possible, Reino and I are going to get out of the center—right now we’re at the center. So the Next Generation Learning Challenge—which is an organization and an effort through EDUCAUSE, and a number of fantastic people who have actually now been funding the assessment for learning work that the SAAL project and future projects will break to—surveyed a bunch of educators about the connection between student learning and teacher learning. And some key takeaways they had were that there needs to be a transformation in the conceptualization of the role of the teacher, okay? And secondly, this reconceptualization, as Margaret pointed out in just that last session, really requires a growth mindset in teachers, right? Teachers have to see themselves as the chief learners in the room; they have to embrace that their practice is growing; it’s not fixed. Truth is, all professionals in our society need to adapt that mindset, because the future of all work is shifting so dramatically that if we as a society are not constantly re-skilling—meaning constantly learning—our opportunities as individuals and the ability to support our families is going to be at risk.

So, additional organizational changes are pivotal, and hopefully we’ll dive a little into that. And lastly, this point cannot be reinforced more: If adults aren’t learning in powerful ways, their students will not be learning in powerful ways.

That’s it, so let’s go there right now and have an experience and see if we can build on that, because all the content in the world isn’t going to change...isn’t going to lead to learning at a transformational level.

It’s experience, plus reflection; that’s what John Dewey said, right? You don’t learn from doing or having experience, you learn from reflecting on that experience.

So, I want to basically put that stake in the ground. And let’s look at this diagram, because the slide doesn’t do justice—you cannot read that. So on your tables you have this, and hopefully the word “experience” will jump out. Take a minute to scan this, and in particular, focus on the list at the bottom in the orange square and then turn to a partner and just have a quick reflection on which of the essential principles resonate most with you.

REINO MAKKONEN

So, the idea is, we want you to be able to think through the challenge of where you are right now. Maybe you want to pair up with someone from your district or from your school and work together to fill this out, sort of design an experience for professional learning for teachers like you. I know many of you are from the same district or the same school, might be worth it, or you want to work independently; that’s fine. I think the idea is just put some ideas down on paper and note the different aspects you’re being asked, so, of course, what’s your idea? What’s the big design idea that you really want to capture, and then—we borrowed this from Sujata yesterday, she actually did the same thing with leaders—how do you want folks to feel during and after the experience and what do you want people to do during and after the experience, and then what principles are you really incorporating into this experience that

you're presenting? So, we really want this to be a planning...plan some action and plan some work for yourselves and that you take back.

So, how do you build an experience for a cadre of educators to change mindsets that this work can work? How do you design experiences for them to really understand that change is required? It's not easy, and I think you can think outside the box because you need to, because right now what we're doing isn't working.

PARTICIPANT 1

So, we'd like to start with our department. We are both teaching in mathematics courses and we have a little group we call the Professional Learning Committee in our department. And what we identified is, we would be designing something that is participative, but applying the FAI, and so we would be designing lessons that would make our peer teachers active learners and participants. And at the end of the session we would like them to feel like "I would reflect on my own practice," and we might be able to convince them to buy in with those strategies and...from the course, and they'll do that course and, yeah... And then we wanted them to empower the students to be able to control and have them direct a hands-on experience with their learning and be responsible learners, so that's how we plan to use this FAI in our...

PARTICIPANT 2

And let's say, for example, we learn from the success criteria, learning goals, and then we... Actually during our class with FAI, I remember the...we were talking about the math lesson and how the teacher actively work with the students and then asking all the different questions and then letting them know that, so this is the success criteria and this will be the learning goals of this activity, and at the end of the lesson, so we reviewed our success criteria for today, so this will be our learning goal, did everybody...all the students are participative or they participated, so what did she do with the students who didn't understand the lesson. So, we would like to do a demonstration similar to that one, but we would be putting the lesson into a different higher-order thinking skills with the application of the FAI.

PARTICIPANT 1

Initially want to target the math department and because we, as a school...not everyone is buying in, and not everyone knows the FAI yet, but we are in our math department...

PARTICIPANT 2

...willing to start.

PARTICIPANT 1

But there's no need to tell us, we are attending the classes, and so we want to start with our group and we hope we can convince them that FAI is effective; and I know it's really effective because of the growth that we do in our course, this course.

PARTICIPANT 3

We are looking to...we've had a small group that have been working at the school, and so we're looking to next year get a much larger group at the school and include the administration.

BOB MONTGOMERY

To do what?

PARTICIPANT 3

To be a part of the professional learning. I think that has to be fit in to the design process as well, because the way it was done before, that didn't work with what we did. So we had some ideas about that. So basically, our learning design is to have school-based formative assessment implementation to develop a process for that to happen that includes the administration, and they're learning and growing on the way and then talking about...what we talked about yesterday, that horizontal...that is not seen as leader [over] teacher, and not neither teacher [over] student, but as that horizontal relationship.

BOB MONTGOMERY

Nice.

PARTICIPANT 4

I'm going to jump in with something we want them to feel; we want them to feel empowered, both while they're in the course and after. That they can, one, that is of value to them, and they want to go in and make those changes, and that they feel like they have the ability to take the risks even if they might not be perfect the first time.

PARTICIPANT 5

We want them to feel collaborative. We do it...my department is working with the Coconino County, and the fact that we have things in common and we can bounce ideas off of each other, and then when things work and don't work we were able to kind of reflect on that later on, and so the collaboration within the learners of formative assessment would be very valuable as well.

PARTICIPANT 6

So, we were talking about our next steps and what we want to do is, we want...we had principals here yesterday, and they want this training themselves, so we're taking it on Tuesday to an Ed leadership—and not just the five who are here, but for the other six and a few others—we're presenting, we're going to free up one of our teachers who's here and they're going to talk about... We were just talking to him at lunch; one of the teachers said, "I've gone through a ----load of training as a teacher..."

BOB MONTGOMERY

Good word.

PARTICIPANT 6

...and taught for a long time, and this is the best training she's ever had that has affected her practice and student learning.

BOB MONTGOMERY

Which training are you referring to?

PARTICIPANT 6

She's talking about the FAI.

BOB MONTGOMERY

Formative Assessment Insights course.

PARTICIPANT 6

Yes, and that's...so our principals yesterday were intrigued by this whole thing and they want the training, so we talked about it; as we thought about it more it really needs to be across, not top down. So, we're going to invite whatever principals wish to embrace this, instead of making them all do it, when we present on Tuesday, and then we're going to ask them to also bring on a team with them, a team of teachers who will be their implementers, to go through it. We'll go through the FAI and support them through it and as we're going through that.

BOB MONTGOMERY

What do you think they are hoping to be feeling when they're having that experience of FAI?

PARTICIPANT 6

That they're growing, that they're being given training that they can immediately embrace and take back and feel solid about and that it's okay to risk failing, that it's okay to be vulnerable in that piece, and that this isn't something that will disappear next year, but something that whatever is thrown at them, they can keep on going with whatever training or whatever else comes along in their educational career. That this is just the base of anything that they do.

BOB MONTGOMERY

Marie Mancuso yesterday talked about how to scale, and she brought an idea to Cynthia Coburn's four dimensions of scale called "Starting with a Core," and I think you are starting with a core, and you are talking about starting with a core, and then you have a core now and you're trying to... So I think the idea of strengthening a core, because you can't just ask leaders to say "do this" or "consider this" until you have something to show them.