

University High School Leadership Retreat Minutes

July 15, 2009

In attendance: Brad Dearing, Janice Ives, Lester Hampton, Kim Rojas, Michelle Panizzi, Kathy Clesson, Diane Walker, Tom Holbrook, Bob Fitzgerald, Wendy Smith, Jeff Hill, Dixie Lewis, Jim Kurz, Andy Davis, Mike Troll, Jim Potter, Brian Conant, Kevin Thompson

Agenda:

1. Review results of "Faculty Leadership Survey"
After lunch Jeff Hill asked the large group to review results of a leadership survey participants had completed online before the retreat. The survey was adopted from the work of Marzano (2003) as well as materials from the ISU C&I department (2005) and was designed to assess the school's effectiveness in nine vital areas.
2. Small group analysis of "Faculty Leadership Survey."
After participants had reviewed the survey they met in small groups to discuss the results. They considered: What is interesting/ surprising about the data? What weaknesses does the survey identify? What needs attention? What conclusions does you group draw from this data?
3. Report to large group.
Each small group then reported out to the large group. Discussion focused on each of the nine areas of effectiveness, one at a time.

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT GUARANTEED AND VIABLE CURRICULUM:

- We are not sure if there is an "essential curriculum" at U-High, and if there is, show that curriculum is communicated to the unit or others.
- We are not sure how important it is to have an "essential curriculum" at U-High: our students seem to be doing well and our teachers appreciate many of their academic freedoms
- Who does or would check to make sure the "essential curriculum" was being taught? In large departments this is complicated because the same courses are taught by many different people in different ways. It is also complicated across the curriculum: there are assumptions or expectations that certain concepts are getting taught in certain classes or on certain levels. Would this be a part of teacher evaluation? How often would this be checked (annually, at the semester, at the quarter)?There
- Is there enough time for departments to establish and reflect upon "essential curriculum?"
- Are there benefits to have a very transparent core curriculum?

- How do we develop a system for the establishment of an “essential curriculum” that includes collaboration (in departments and across the curriculum). How do we assess the “essential curriculum:” common assessments? Portfolios?

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT CHALLENGING GOALS AND EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

- Do we have a specific school achievement goal (such as AYP)?
- How comfortable are faculty with college readiness scores?
- Assessment of school and individual goals for learning does not really happen; and it is not used to plan for future actions.
- Some student may have some specific goals, but not every student.
- Test scores are one kind of assessment to consider, but there are others; portfolios, senior projects and seminars.
- It is difficult to set school goals when we are unclear about the “essential content”
- Where do state and national standards fit into this? Are they difficult enough to be valuable to our teachers and student population?
- How do graduation requirements play into this?
- Goals and feedback are different for U-High than many schools because of our high achieving student population.

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- The Website is a very powerful tool that continues to inform and evolve as a tool to help communicate with parents.
- We want parents who are engaged and involved in their students’ learning and willing to help – how do we teach them to do this?
- We do have parents involved in most of our decision making groups (Keystone subcommittees, CAC, Boosters, apportionment).

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT SAFE AND ORDERLY ENVIRONMENT

- There are rules at this school, but one of the major issues seems to be their implementation: students seem to know that in some places or with some supervisors, the rules are different. It sometimes seems to matter more where you are or who you know.
- The administration may need to communicate more often or more clearly about the consequences and discipline issues in the school, though faculty should understand that the administration sometimes cannot communicate about a discipline issue.
- It may not be reasonable to expect one person can be responsible for this; how do other faculty impact the environment?
- Can class time be protected? Is there a way to communicate with students about discipline and attendance without pulling them from class?
- Is there a loophole in the attendance / tardy procedures?

- Whose responsibility is it to enforce the rules?
- How is behavior different in the cafeteria and library than the classroom? How do we manage behavior in these environments?
- There are several indicators (lounge furniture, library, discipline) that our students needs to better learn pride, respect and responsibility; how do we teach this? How should we teach this?
- The physical environment does not seem as clean as it used to be. There were many problems with the physical space last year.
- Do we have a formal system to identify and follow-up with students who we identify as prone ot violence or extreme behavior?

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT COLLEGIALITY AND PROFESSIONLISM

- Much of our professional development is focused on technology (laptop initiative); how do we go about involving others?
- There is not enough time for departments to work together or for cross curricular discussions and planning.
- There may be some isolation issues, especially departments being isolated from other departments, though this is pretty normal for a secondary school.

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT HOME ENVIRONMENT

- We need to carefully consider how we inform and train or parents in many areas: do we train them about how to access information on Skyward, and also how that information should be used?
- Do we provide parents with enough information about what is necessary to be successful in the underclass or upperclass?
- Do we provide parents with enough information about how help their students to be successful in our classes?
- Is there a way to reformat or rethink Open House so that it could be more productive?

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT LEARNED INTELLIGENCE AND BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

- What are some ways to provide students with “feedback on their knowledge gain?” How is this done?
- Are standardized tests enough information for students and teachers about their achievement?
- Do students understand the objectives and rationale for the things happening in their classes? Or are they just going through the motions?
- Do we encourage enough reflection on their own learning from students?
- Is it important for student to be able to describe what they have learned and why it has been important for them to learn it?

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT STUDENT MOTIVATION

- There are strong connections between student motivation and pride.
- How do we motivate students? What works for our students?

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT CLINICAL EXPERIENCES

- Communication seems to be an area where we need to improve.
 - We are doing very well in this category, probably because of our focus on this issue over the last few years. How do we take the same energy and focus and apply it to a new area that needs improvement?
4. Review and reflection on “Pioneer Plan for Progress” / Compare “Pioneer Plan for Progress” with conclusions from “Faculty Leadership Survey” / Make recommendations for 2009-2010 school year

We had planned to finish the retreat by examining re-examining the Pioneer Plan for Progress through the lens of our discussion on this survey, but we did not have the time. **Participants were asked to do this on their own and send their responses to Jeff Hill.** The group agreed that they would like to meet once more before school begins.