

Catholic Diocese of Saginaw Teacher Growth Model

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What I did:

In order to provide a sustainable professional growth model for the teachers in our diocese, I facilitated a number of professional development meetings with my front line administrators, as well as with our Diocesan instructional staff as a whole.

The Catholic Diocese of Saginaw is comprised of 18 schools. There are 3 high schools and 15 elementary schools ranging in configuration from Pre-kindergarten to eighth grade. There are over 3,000 students in our Catholic schools serviced by over 350 teachers. There was a very strong need to determine the areas where our teachers needed to grow, from a curricular, faith-based, technology, and management perspective.

The process began when the Educational Leaders in the diocese formed a committee to evaluate several existing teacher growth models. These included the models of Robert Marzano and Charlotte Danielson. After much discussion and self-study, the committee selected the Charlotte Danielson Teacher Growth Model to monitor educational best practices. The committee also selected the spiritual rubric from the Diocese of Iowa to reflect upon the teachers' spiritual needs across our program.

In order for implementation of this growth model to be successful, the people charged with evaluating teacher effectiveness needed to understand how to use the tool. Extensive professional development was provided to the Educational Leaders in our diocese. The professional development entailed guest speakers from the local universities who provided workshops on examples of engaged classrooms, analysis of student data, and examples of

differentiated instruction to meet the individual needs of students and protocols for "Three Minute Walk-throughs". Our Educational Leaders need to know what an actively engaged classroom looks like in order to discern where our teachers excel or need to grow. To support these efforts, a curriculum map of crucial benchmarks, which defines a timeline for meetings and data collection, was developed for the entire diocese.

At the end of the 2011-12 school-year, all 350 teachers in the Diocese of Saginaw came together to celebrate the end of a successful school year and to prepare for the 2012-13 school-year. The Diocese of Saginaw Teacher Growth Model was rolled-out at this professional development day. Staff was given the opportunity to review the tool and ask questions. A copy of Charlotte Danielson's book *Enhancing Professional Practice: A framework for teaching* was given to each teacher. All teachers in the diocese were also provided a hard copy of the growth model. The expectation for the staff was that when they came back for the 2012-13 school-year they would be familiar with the tool, be prepared to meet with their building level administrator, and be knowledgeable about what they needed to do to be exceptional teachers.

What did I learn?

I learned that with the right resources and solid performance data, people who had developed strong counterproductive skill sets could be carefully guided onto a path of reflective renewal based on an increased locus of control; a juxtapositioning of professional self-concept that leads to increased professional rejuvenation. In other words, when teachers are provided resources, support, and data to make crucial decisions that impact instruction, there are those who rise to the occasion and others who cannot meet the challenge. In order for there to be perceived value to what we do on a daily basis, both educationally and spiritually, we have to

hold people accountable. Our Diocese of Saginaw Teacher Growth model has allowed us to start a foundation upon which we can continue to build on.

What Difference Did It Make?

Perhaps one of the greatest impacts this process has had is that my Educational Leaders are much more visible in their schools. The Educational Leaders are in the classrooms on a regular basis and have realized that it is vital for them to circulate through the school consistently in order to observe teaching, learning and behavioral issues in action. Their feedback to the front line support and instructional staff has a greater depth of validity due to the fact that they are now seen as being actively engaged in the learning process.

Another major benefit for the programs is that our teachers are now utilizing data to drive their instruction in their classrooms in a way never realized before. Instructional decisions are rooted in strong formative and summative assessment data, and this corresponds to increased attention to the quality of instruction being delivered to the students. In some instances, Educational Leaders have utilized this data based decision making for funding and spending decisions.

As a result of these actions, our teachers have become empowered to guide their own professional development throughout our diocese. There has been a renewed sense of commitment of our instructors that they not only have the responsibility to attend professional development activities, but that they have the ability to identify and develop such activities for themselves, as well as for their peers. We have also seen an increase in the sharing of professional development resources as a result of these meetings. Programs that have resources

due to categorical funding sources are inviting their peers to training opportunities. This never would have occurred in the old climate.

Educational Leaders are more confident and willing to ensure that ineffective teachers are being evaluated out of the Catholic school system. We no longer have an air of tolerance for bad instruction. It has been realized by the Educational Leaders in our programs that their “worst staff member” is their “model employee”: that individual sets the bar of tolerance for mediocrity across the program.

Conversely, and more appropriately, exceptional teachers are being recognized and moved into positions as building and Diocesan Teacher Leaders. We are elevating exceptionality; we are celebrating success through the sharing of competencies and capabilities. Those that can do in our system are now leading the charge for their peers to become more effective instructors.

Positive change is slowly occurring in the Diocese of Saginaw; it is deliberate, and it is incremental. We have pockets of cultural resistance and institutional processes that need to be massaged appropriately, else major resistance to any improvement initiatives will ensue, and positive overtures for improved student outcomes will potentially become flash points for intransigence.