

TEACHER IMPACT GOALS STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS #1: Teacher Talk's area of focus asks teacher leaders to embrace and lead necessary change, such as changes to existing structures and mindsets.

TEACHER IMPACT GOALS STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS #2:

The strategic area of focus is to develop nascent ideas by teacher leaders into innovative, executable logic model and action plans.

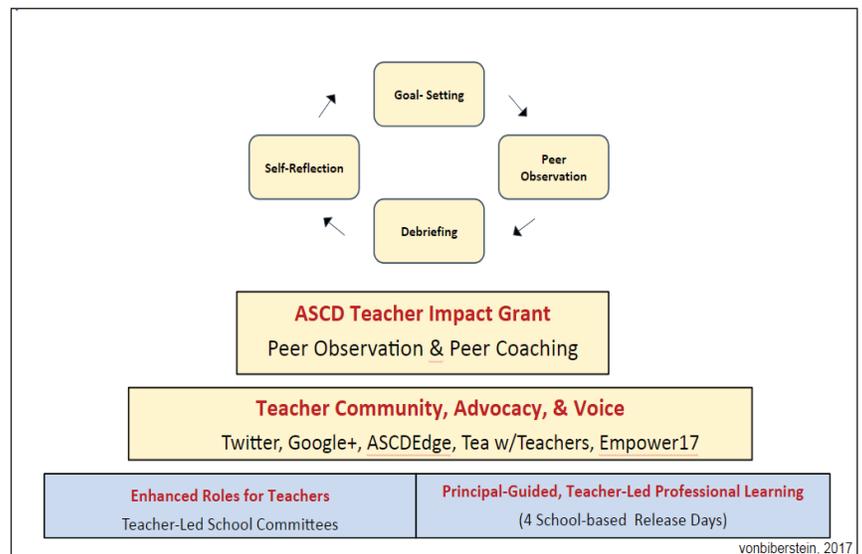
SCHOOL/DISTRICT: Ridgeview Charter Middle School, International Baccalaureate World School

Fulton County Schools, Georgia

OVERVIEW

Ridgeview's *Teacher Talk: Leveraging One-to-One Through the Power of Ten* is a project designed to ignite a sense of collective professionalism among teachers and staff at a medium-sized, metro-Atlanta middle school. The Teacher Talk project trained teachers to lead critical conversations aligned to the goals of our IB-Middle Years Program and key focus areas personalized learning initiative. ASCD TIG funding introduced workshop-based peer coaching training, offered flexible release time to teachers, and provided consultant-led training. In turn, participants took charge of their own learning in ways that addressed their needs as professionals, catered to the unique needs of their students, deepened teaching expertise, and furthered positive beliefs about their work with students at the school.

The project was designed for and by teachers who had an interest in learning from each other through collaboration and peer observation. It aligned to the district's strategic vision of delivering innovative, rigorous instruction, and it supported the goal of developing and retaining excellent teachers. Each quarter, participants engaged a colleague in the cycle of inquiry where they identified a problem of classroom practice, set instructional goals to address the problem, encouraged the use of new strategies, shared nonjudgmental feedback, and promoted shared reflection on classroom instruction.



RCS Peer Coaching Project Launch:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BweXRCgPVF2FbGRzaFVZQ115WjA/view?usp=sharing>

THE CHALLENGE

What was the challenge you were facing? What goals were you trying to achieve?

The challenge that teachers faced was that we needed time to collaboratively experiment with new personalized learning strategies; we needed time to reflect on the delivery of inquiry-based units. The goal of our project was to build a strong professional community through job-embedded learning experiences that allowed teachers to guide their own learning, promoted opportunities to perfect the use of new pedagogy, and encouraged deep levels of shared reflection. As professionals, we wanted to build expertise by observing and receiving feedback from trusted colleagues. The peer coaching approach addressed these needs by introducing a school structure that supported organic opportunities for focused, growth-oriented collaboration that offered teachers feedback that was independent of any type of teacher evaluation.

Summarize three points of frustration you faced.

At the end of the 2015–16 school year, a group of teachers noticed that a few colleagues who genuinely cared about their students, who believed in their students' ability to learn, and who were clearly committed to the school's vision of teaching excellence planned to either leave the school or exit the teaching profession. The colleagues that were leaving our school loved their work, but they felt overwhelmed with not having enough time to manage the day to day tasks to excel in their roles as teachers. In addition, there was a general consensus that "stress levels were high," and that teachers had "little time available to do the work that really mattered to them." To us, the thought of losing one exceptional colleague over the course of a school year was frustrating. In 2015, we lost more than a few colleagues whose opinions we valued and whose dedication to teaching inspired our students.

What strategies were you attempting to use before to solve this problem?

Time for teacher collaboration consisted of two 50-minute periods that were embedded into the daily school schedule. Because common planning time was without students, this time was reserved for developing units, writing lesson plans, analyzing student data, grading student work, connecting with parents, and meeting with PLC teams. It was assumed that this amount of time was sufficient; however, this time scarcely accounted for the time needed to develop new skills associated with refining the delivery of inquiry-based units and learning new skills associated with our school's personalized learning initiative.

Sandy Springs



By the Numbers

16% English Language Learners

10% Students with Disabilities

29% Gifted Learners

54% Free and Reduced-Price Lunch

<https://schoolgrades.georgia.gov>



Madeline Hagaman (English Language Arts) and Brooke Shively (Social Studies) met to set goals and plan for peer observation. This peer coaching pair worked to implement and refine positive behavior intervention strategies in classes with large percentages of high-needs learners. This fall, teachers plan to experiment with the use of new AVID strategies, and RCS teachers will continue the transition from using traditional classroom routines and procedures to the techniques aligned to the Google classroom environment.

What was the big “aha” moment when you decided you needed to try something new?

The big “aha” moment occurred when we thought about how scarce incremental minutes were for teachers at our school. The majority of teachers regularly worked far more than a 40-hour work week, and time to do “extra” for our own professional growth was noticeably absent from our work day. We wished we had more time to slow down, we wanted to experiment with new instructional techniques and strategies, we wanted feedback, and we wanted to develop as professionals and to be better than our previous selves.

Teachers commented that they would have liked to observe a colleague in their classroom; however, some felt like this was something that an administrator needed to tell them to do, and some colleagues thought that this type of opportunity really did not exist at our school.

Peer coaching addressed the need to improve our teaching practices because it involved setting a challenging instructional goal, preconferencing with a colleague, observing an instructional strategy during classroom instruction, and debriefing the experience. It was an approach that structured time for teachers to experiment with new instructional strategies, offered the opportunity to develop expertise around an area of need, supported the transfer of workshop-based learning, provided one-on-one time to collaborate with trusted colleagues, and deepened the positive beliefs we held about our work with students at the school.

With the whole-hearted support of our school’s leadership and ASCD TIG support, we launched our project. The grant award gave us the credibility to move forward with our idea; we gained the freedom to step out of the fast-paced world of our classroom to draw upon one another’s professional strengths.

What was the top reason you selected this grant?

The Teacher Impact Grant offered greater levels of teacher autonomy and gave us the opportunity to design our own learning in ways that catered to our needs as professionals, the needs of learners, and the needs within our school context. The application process was reasonable, and the program offered support over the course of the year.



Andrea von Biberstein (ESOL) and Joelle Chivers (French) plan sessions for teacher-led schoolwide professional learning. TIG grant release time provided time for colleagues to transfer skills gained in workshops, navigate through new student learning platforms, and visit showcased schools to observe the new strategies being used in classrooms.

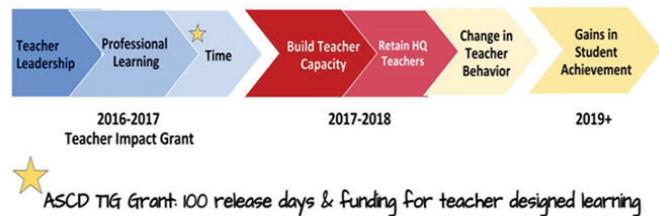


Kathryn Kersey, Caroline Boddiford, and Jessica Burgess met to identify their PLD needs and set peer observation goals.



Sam Bell is a second-career middle school engineering teacher who is in his fourth year in the profession. This year's ASCD Teacher Talk project provided four full release days to peer-observe colleagues teaching high school engineering and science classes at two area high schools. He also used ASCD TIG support to plan the development and creation of a website for other middle school teachers. Through this project, Mr. Bell observed and collaborated with his colleagues at feeder high schools to vertically align the middle school engineering curriculum. Mr. Bell will continue to deepen his knowledge and build a community that shares engineering content across the 6–12 continuum.

Theory of Change:



THE RESPONSE

How has the Teacher Impact Grant work helped you achieve your goals or solve a problem?

This grant provided the time we needed to enact our theory of change. Release time created time for peer observation and coaching; we learned how to apply new instructional strategies, refined classroom management techniques, and gained deeper understanding about how to deliver instruction through an inquiry-based framework (IB-MYP). We feel that we improved as individuals and built a sense of commitment at our school; moreover, we now can see the connection between teacher collaboration, teacher growth, and collective excellence. The grant has made our work at the school more personal.

The Teacher Impact Grant also created opportunities for teachers to learn in ways that we never expected. The TIG experience expanded our reach. We tapped into the skills and expertise available on social media; we sought ideas from neighboring schools; we visited national demonstration schools to observe the best of AVID and IB-MYP; we advocated for the profession in Washington, DC; and we shared our experience at ASCD's Empower17 conference in Anaheim, California. Because of the ASCD TIG experience, we gained a new sense of collective professionalism, and our world became bigger.

How has it impacted your school/district/teachers/principals/students?

This project deepened relationships among teachers and school leaders at the school level, it positively influenced our attitudes toward our work, and it contributed to subtle increases in our staff's overall capacity to deliver instruction.

At the school level, relationships based on trust and mutual respect deepened over the course of the school year. The principal and his administrative team validated our



In November 2016, Caroline Boddiford (AVID), Madeline Hagaman (English Language Arts), and Andrea von Biberstein (not in photo) attended "Tea with Teachers" in Washington, DC. Teachers received leadership training from ASCD experts and attended a tea with the Secretary of Education. Through this experience, we shared the challenges that were specific to our setting, collaborated with other TIG Awardees, learned about ESSA, and heard firsthand from Washington about the potential effect of changes in federal education policy.

approach to innovation by attending Teacher Talk events, protecting and honoring time to meet in small groups, participating in large group meetings, and providing school-based funding support to participate in national ASCD events. This type of support from leadership validated the work we did as professionals, and it contributed to a successful first year of the project.

The TIG project deepened relationships among teachers and instilled positive beliefs about our work with students at our school. The project introduced a different type of professional learning experience. Participants commented that “one thing that was really different was having the opportunity to work with other teachers in their classroom environment,” and they felt that “it was different to learn from and be challenged by colleagues.” One of our project leads summarized the unique effect of the project by commenting that “it gave us inspiration and that desire to know more,” because “collaborating in this way was about self-affirmation, filling a need that [we] did not know existed.”

In addition to building a collaborative school-based culture, the project supported the transfer of skills learned from consultant-led workshops; expanded our presence on social media; and supported the development of a collaborative, learning-oriented school culture. This contributed to subtle increases in our overall capacity to deliver instruction. In time, we know that it is this type of dynamic that will result in schoolwide gains in student achievement.

THE RESULTS

What specific metrics can you share about the impact it had (having data for a graph/chart/figure or two is greatly preferred)?

Ten teachers volunteered to participate in the peer coaching project. In turn, the participants felt that the project overwhelmingly supported their own development. We estimated that this work encompassed the work of at least 39 other colleagues. Over the course of the school year, we noticed increases in teacher interest and participation. We anticipate this trend to continue through 2018. Each opportunity to collaborate not only provided an opportunity to improve professionally; it built each other’s expertise, and we collectively evolved as professionals.

On the Interim survey that was administered in early May, 100 percent of the Teacher Talk participants (nine responses) rated the quality of the project as either “good” or “excellent.” Participants commented that the strongest aspect of the project was that it “introduced a new structure” and it “provided time for teachers to learn so much from and with each other.” Participants described the project as “self-directed,” “powerful,” “valuable,” “enjoyable,” “encouraging,” and “very worthwhile.”

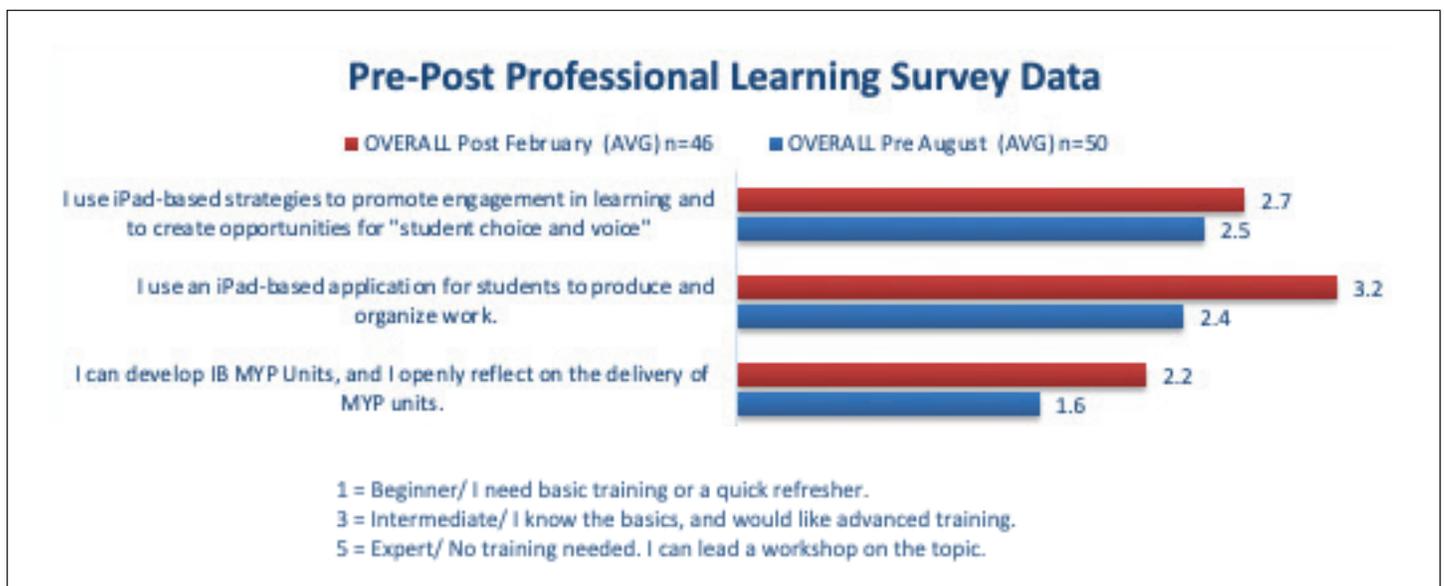


Last March, Ridgeview teachers traveled to Anaheim, CA, to share the ASCD TIG experience at Empower17. It was an opportunity to learn from experts in the field, internalize the project’s outcomes, and share learning with a national audience. After the Empower17 conference, we observed instruction at an IB-Middle Years Program School at El Segundo Middle School in Los Angeles. This experience made us feel confident in our work at Ridgeview and eager to bring back new ideas.

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Djz3M5c_-lMeMkt2loKCVXoUgzy7mmlyTagd1FP2ks/edit?usp=sharing

Overwhelmingly, 100 percent of the respondents indicated that the project improved their professional practice, influenced teachers' instructional practices, and directly influenced student learning. Eighty-eight percent felt that the project was supported by the school's administration, enabled them to apply new knowledge and skills, and created a culture of leadership. More than 75 percent of teachers who participated in the project believed that it could serve as a model to be replicated, and it could help to drive school transformation.

Teacher Talk improved the quality of collaboration. It is likely that our project contributed to improvement in our staff's beliefs about their ability to deliver IB-MYP units and their ability to use new personalized learning techniques in their classrooms. On the Pre-Post professional learning survey that was administered to staff-at-large, teachers expressed more confidence in developing and reflecting on IB-MYP units of instruction. They reported significant increases in their ability to use technology to produce and organize student work.



What is the single biggest reason you would recommend applying for a Teacher Impact Grant in the future?

The TIG grant recognized our work by funding our proposal by providing expert support, recognizing the potential of our project, validating our expertise, and believing in our ability to reinvent ourselves. Teachers commented that "the open interaction with colleagues was amazing" and "fantastic." Others commented that "the experience was extremely helpful and eye-opening."

We unanimously agreed that the project was a huge success and "a key component of our professional growth this year." Through this experience we identified and addressed challenges of practice, we deepened relationships with colleagues, we improved as professionals. Together, we began to define what we understand to be "our collective professional identity."

CALL TO ACTION: Use your personal narrative reflections and survey data from each reporting period to provide a call to action for professional learning and development.

What is your biggest takeaway from administering this grant?

Scholars in the field urged educators to embrace a spirit of collective professionalism for professional learning and development (PLD), and they have challenged teachers to rise up with a Call to Action (Fullan and Hargraves, 2016). The ASCD TIG experience allowed us to define what high quality PLD is within our setting, and it taught us how to carry out our own call to action.



The TIG experience showed us that high quality **PLD must offer opportunities for teachers to collaborate in ways that speak to the needs of the professionals and adapt to the parameters within our workplace setting.** The ASCD TIG experience supported our professional goals, truly complemented workshop-based professional learning, and provided insight into the type of professionals we individually and collectively aspire to become. Teachers improve their performance through PLD that is self-directed, specific to their goals as professionals, and specific to address the needs of their students. In turn, school leaders must create the conditions for teachers to create their own learning experiences that are collaborative, based on relationships of trust, involve professional risk-taking, and are aligned to the immediate needs of their students. Our project created the conditions for cultivating teaching excellence where professionals openly experimented with curricular frameworks, analyzed instructional decisions, created performance-based assessments, and safely shared the successes and failures associated with delivering sophisticated curricular content.



Caroline Boddiford (front right), Royanne Baer, Oliver Blackwell (principal), Susie Richerson, Anita Jackson, and Kim Gunter met to identify schoolwide goals for our Personalized Learning initiative. This teacher-led school committee encouraged us to experiment with new strategies and modeled techniques for us in their classrooms. Their knowledge and expertise guided and supported our learning.



In December of 2017, Ridgeview will send a team to share our story of “Teacher Impact: Teachers Leading Learning” at Learning Forward’s Annual Conference in Orlando.

2404 | Teacher Impact: Teachers Leading Learning

Teacher-led professional learning is all the rage, but with so many initiatives and so little time, what steps can school leaders take to promote teaching that will make an impact on student learning? Hear how one school leveraged teacher-leadership roles to transition successfully to one-to-one personalized learning. Understand how teacher-led professional learning and peer coaching work in tandem to improve instruction and transform school culture. Examine how enhanced roles for teachers, teacher-led professional learning, and peer coaching build teacher capacity and support teacher self-efficacy.

Area of focus: Learning Communities

Topics: Leadership development and skills; **Teacher recruitment, support, development, and retention**

Audiences: Principals, Assistant Principals; School-Based Staff Developers/Instructional Coaches; Teacher Leaders/Mentors/Team Leaders

Andrea Von Biberstein, Fulton County Schools, Sandy Springs, GA

Royanne Baer, Fulton County Schools, Sandy Springs, GA

Oliver Blackwell, Fulton County Schools, Sandy Springs, GA

Caroline Boddiford, Sandy Springs, GA

PLD must offer opportunities for deep levels of engagement. To become the best in our field, we must embrace the dynamics of our content area and engage learners through our knowledge of pedagogy, through use of available teaching resources, and most importantly, through the beliefs that we hold about our work as professionals and our work with students. The TIG project revealed how our best teachers generate students who think critically on issues and inspire them to solve problems that are significant in our world. Teachers need PLD that allows teachers regularly navigate through the series of decisions that are specific to the context— decisions that are based on the age-specific learning goals that are enmeshed in our subject area’s curriculum. It is this expertise that inspires a love of learning, and it is these understandings that separate our best teachers from all others.

PLD must allow teachers with the choice to learn from colleagues within our school buildings, from teachers around our district, and from educators beyond. It is these experiences that enable us to acquire new understandings. Through peer coaching, classroom observation, and social networking, we found a better way to reflect on the way we respond to students. We gained greater insight into how students make sense of the content, as well their misconceptions. These experiences provided a forum for developing a deeper community. When our world expands, we develop deeper levels of teaching expertise, we build professional confidence, and we reach beyond known limits.

PLD must help teachers develop our individual and collective professional identities. Although our district and school provide access to the resources needed to develop teaching expertise, it is the individual experience within the school setting that allows us to embrace change. Deepening collaboration with trusted colleagues around the elements of instruction fosters higher levels of professional commitment to the students in our classrooms. The Teacher Impact project taught us that excellence is deeply personal, and it is driven by the beliefs we hold about ourselves and our work with students in our setting, in turn, we can make an impact— improve learning for all students.

In sum, PLD that is self-directed, develops commitment, promotes collaborative leadership, encourages instructional risk-taking, and creates a structure to experiment with new strategies will define who we are individually and collectively.

Thank you, ASCD. The TIG experience created the conditions for a bigger world.

On Collective Professionalism:

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1xIMuZpqaIJS5JlTcRVp9RgLn_n8G9w9JTP15ttiPPxU/edit?usp=sharing

<https://learningforward.org/docs/default-source/pdf/bringing-the-profession-back-in.pdf>

Teacher Talk: A CALL To ACTION

- 1- Collaboration that works for us.
- 2- Supports deep learning with teachers
- 3- Allows us to go outside and to learn inside the classroom.
- 4- Defines who we are individually and collectively... this makes our world bigger.

Fullan, A. and Hargraves, M. (2016). Keynote Address @Learning Forward's Annual Conference, Vancouver, Canada

