

SPRINT 3 TRANSCRIPT

Lesson 3: Developing PD that Matters

Well hi there! Welcome to your last lesson of this sprint. Today, we're going to talk about how you can plan an engaging and meaningful professional development session. You know, this is going to be so important for you as you move ahead in your journey as an arts integration specialist. One of the biggest things you'll do in that role is deliver PD. And I'm so excited that you'll have your first chance to do that with this sprint project. Here's what we're going to cover today:

- The real purpose of professional development
- How to use adult learning theory to your advantage
- The keys to an engaging PD session

Alright - let's get right down to it. Professional development provides the tools for our teachers, administrators, staff and parents to be active participants in changing how students learn. It is the key that unlocks the potential for each one of us to be outstanding at what we do. And in arts integration, it is **the** essential ingredient for a successful program.

Professional development is the direct and purposeful act of engaging in any event which causes you to learn. Because arts integration is a program which requires teachers to use arts methodology and skill as a vehicle to teaching the content areas, teachers need to have access, time and support to discovering and learning these skills themselves. Teachers also need to have a strong understanding of the process, why it's beneficial, what it looks like in practice, and how to do it themselves. There are a variety of highly efficient and effective professional development models that can be used for introducing, expanding and extending your arts integration program. The following is a list of ways which are widely practiced with high levels of success. Most likely, you'll use the brain-based learning methods in your upcoming project and save the others for your in-school or in-district PD. But I want you to have a good understanding of each so you're prepared as a professional no matter what kind of PD you're asked to provide.

Brain-based learning

Brain-based learning is based on the premise of teaching the way that the brain functions. The basic idea is that the brain is a parallel processor, capable of doing multiple things at once. Each unique brain has common ways of using this processor: by creating meaning, learning through patterns, and that learning is enhanced through challenge.

So what does this mean for professional development? In order to truly engage your participants in active learning, you'll need to teach the content through ways that create meaning for them. This can include using commonly seen images, using technology that is familiar in new ways (taking polls through texting, using prezzi.com instead of powerpoint, using Twitter.com as a professional discussion tool), or through vignettes. People learn best when they are forced to participate in a situation that is realistic to a problem that they would run into in daily life. By setting up a vignette of a lesson plan, you can provide them with a safe place to test out their ideas. For example, when teaching your staff how to use tableau in their classroom, you may consider having them actually create a tableau of a familiar topic. By being placed in a situation that requires them to be the teacher and the student, the brain is highly engaged and making critical connections.

Make sure that when you design your professional development activities using brain-based learning principles, you try a few of these techniques:

- * Creating rich, stimulating environments - use various colors or textures when presenting material. But keep it consistent - you don't want to be distracting.
- * Create time for discussions or questions. If through an online presentation, ask them to pause the video and write down their ideas or thoughts.
- * Allow time and space for movement - this is a great way to work in a small technique example for a dance integrated lesson! If you're doing this online, model what you want them to do on the screen and then give them a chance to do it in their own homes or classrooms. If you don't want to model, give them small, specific instructions for how to move in the activity.
- * Change your displays and music during the session. Small changes make the brain become more attentive and by changing these often, the brain is working at a higher state of conscious awareness.

Professional Learning Communities

Professional learning communities are small groups that are dedicated to studying one particular area in regards to education during the school year or other such designated time period. Now, this isn't going to necessarily be a possible option for your sprint project in this program - after all, PLCs take place over long periods of time. But I do want you to know about them as they can be very beneficial to how you create PD opportunities in your actual school or district.

PLCs can be grade level teams, but can also consist of a variety of members from the staff. Their purpose is to have in-depth study, research, and discussion about a professional topic, reflect upon its use in the school and what its potential impact on student achievement might be. They meet regularly (usually weekly or bi-weekly, but this can vary), have a set goal/purpose and are able to submit a product of some sort that demonstrates their learning or meeting their goal.

A professional learning community works very well as a way to both begin an arts integration program, and also as a way to sustain an arts integration program. By starting with a small PLC, selected from teacher leaders within your school as well as anyone else who wants to learn more about arts integration, you provide the opportunity for rich conversation, convergent and divergent thinking, a community of trust, and the ability to experiment with the program. This is a low-risk option for implementing the program, so many administrators like this method best because if arts integration does not take off, there is little harm done in the way of "image control". Meanwhile, teachers have the benefits of planning cooperatively, collaborating during lessons and being able to take time to observe other schools using arts integration because substitutes would only be required for a few teachers in the building - not the entire staff. A PLC can also then serve as a steering committee for implementing the arts integration program school-wide because they had the chance to study it with so much depth in the first year.

PLC's are also a wonderful way to sustain the arts integration initiative as it continues year after year. Each year, new staff members arrive and veteran staff members who haven't had the chance to study arts integration in depth then get an opportunity to do so. This allows you to keep the whole school on the same page, using the same "vocabulary", understanding the vision, and learning new techniques. Each year, the PLC can choose a new strand or focus within the arts integration model to study and explore, allowing the program to grow from within itself. Eventually, you'll have some former PLC members coming back to this PLC at some point to learn some new skills or techniques within the program.

I would highly recommend that your school include other PLC strands, other than just arts integration. PLC's are a wonderful way to build community between and across grade/department level teams because teachers from all over the school can join any PLC. In addition, schools tend to have more than one focus for school improvement. By offering multiple PLC's, your school members will feel like they have a choice in their own professional development and the people that are in the Arts Integration PLC will be there because they WANT to be there, rather than because they HAVE to be there. Remember - this mindset shift makes a huge difference!

Whole-School

Whole school professional development is a good option for doing large-scale arts integration work. For instance, when you want to celebrate the accomplishments of the arts integration PLC or share some teacher-created lesson plans, a whole school professional development meeting would be the way to go. Also, when you want to teach or extend some basic arts integration classroom techniques, it can be very beneficial to have a whole school professional development meeting to share these topics. You can break into small groups and use brain-based learning strategies during the whole school meeting, but by having everyone come together, the whole school can scaffold their learning at the same time.

Whole school professional development can be like Chutes and Ladders. By holding these meetings, you can increase teacher knowledge, skills and synthesis leaps ahead within a short period of time, **if done properly**. By this, I mean that you utilize adult learning theory, people are coming together to share productive and positive ideas that they had already been working on in small groups outside of the meeting, and are consciously using brain-friendly techniques like think-pair-share, movement, connecting to popular culture, technology and more. This requires a lot of preparation, but the benefits are outstanding. Teachers will walk away with a lot of knowledge and excitement and will want to try it out on their own. However, if you're not careful, these meetings can also cause the program to fall down the chute a couple of levels. By simply standing up and showing a powerpoint, teachers will disengage and begin to be resentful for giving up their time. Also, if there is no background knowledge on the topic, you have not addressed their other needs and therefore, the presentation will have no meaning. Finally, while it's wonderful that teachers can walk away with things to implement right away, they haven't built collegial relationships and trust with their peers to support their newfound skills and excitement. Without these foundational

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relationships, people will not have the support system they need to sustain their enthusiasm. Overall, whole school professional development has its place and can be a fantastic way to build school awareness and motivation for arts integration. Just don't rely on this method for all or even most of your professional development.

Mentoring/Coaching

Having some mentors and coaches in place throughout the building is also a great way to provide quick and efficient professional development to your teachers. Sometimes, it's just not convenient or realistic to wait for a meeting to discuss some ideas or a lesson plan, or to get some answers to an important question. Mentors and Coaches provide an intermediary that can answer questions about arts integration methodology and curricular connections, be a support person for people when they are nervous about trying a lesson, and even be the person who can help people sort out and find their own synthesis and reflection of the program. They can guide teachers through typical scenarios and be a type of "reference quick book" for your teachers on a daily basis. This also saves you from having to be the only resource in the building, which can be very time consuming and ill-advised if you have another position in that school (such as a teacher or an administrator). By "spreading the wealth", you're "spreading the health" of arts integration. We'll be talking much more about mentoring and coaching in our final sprint of this program.

Using Adult Learning Theory

In order to truly communicate effectively and for teachers to respond well to your professional development, you must keep in mind adult learning theory and how it is different than how you teach on a daily basis. Many educators think that leading professional development is easy because it is just teaching. In fact, this is often not the case because educators are trying to teach their peers as though they were students. This can cause resentment, "tuning out" and a general attitude of ambivalence toward you and your program. In order to avoid this, you'll need to have a basic understanding of adult learning theory and how to harness it to work for you.

Adults are self-directed and can motivate and learn for themselves. What they need from you is a facilitator to point them in the right direction and then give them the freedom to discover on their own. You also need to recognize that adults have a wealth of experiences and may have worthy things to contribute to the program based

on those experiences. Provide a way for them to shine! Adults also need a goal to reach and that goal needs to be relevant and practical to their lives in some way. If you can't explain that arts integration is relevant in their classrooms and that the professional development that will be provided will directly address how to use arts integration to impact student learning, you will get no where. Make sure that this is one of the first things that you speak to when working with your staff. And, remember to not overwhelm your staff with everything all at once. Be practical! Put yourself in their shoes - can they realistically accomplish this in one month, one quarter, one year? Treat these wonderful adults with the respect that they deserve as you work with them (not teach at them) towards using arts integration.

The nice thing about being teachers is that good teaching is always good teaching. While the adult learner is different than the students in your classroom and must be treated differently, the way in which you teach the content is relatively the same. You must provide a source of motivation and engagement to capture their interest right from the beginning. You must set reasonable expectations and outline them clearly right from the start. Make sure that you are positive, but firm when your teachers are working through the process. You always want to remain upbeat and upward spiral a conversation to think about the possibilities, rather than the challenges. However, you'll also need to be firm in that this is a research-based method and the school will be implementing it. Don't allow the program to be battered down by a few "Negative Nancy's" - politely address their concerns and redirect them into thinking about solutions. You'll also need to provide opportunities for retention of your information through practice. Encourage teachers to try a technique or to work with a peer to create a lesson plan. Teachers will only truly learn this information with practice and by reflection of their own practice.

The keys to an engaging PD session

Now, we've gone over a lot of different ideas, theories and strategies for professional development. But none of that will mean a hoot if your session isn't engaging. After creating and delivering hundreds of PD sessions over the years, I've found a few tips that make for a positive PD experience:

1. Cut out the fluff. Almost every PD session I've ever done has been 80% fluff when I first write it out. I always do a first draft to get all my thoughts out first. Then, I cut about 75% out of it. Everything that's not necessary gets tossed. This leaves me with a core 25% to work with and refine down to that final 20% of the real good.

2. That also means you want to get straight to the good stuff. Don't fool around with lots of data and background if that's not what your audience needs. Consider why they're there and then deliver what they need to be successful in your focal topic.
3. If you're going to use slides, budget 1 slide for every minute you plan to present. So if you have 15 minutes, plan on at least 15 slides. If you have 45 minutes, plan on 45 slides. This keeps you moving! Also, don't put a lot of text on slides. Use high impact images or videos and then just speak to the slide. You can include notes in the notes area if you want, but I always like to engage with my audience so I don't read the notes anyway. And yes - you can use bullets, but only 3-4 per slide. Finally, keep any slides consistent in design. Don't go overboard and don't use a mixmatch of fonts and color themes. Pick a theme and stick to it. And any font should be at least 50 points or more for easy readability.
4. Use a framework for your presentation. This will help you keep a solid flow going and make the session more impactful. Think of a great novel - there's always a clear plot line right? The same is true for any PD session. I typically like to start out with a quick, 1 minute or less introduction of who I am and what I do - just enough to build a little connection and trust. Then, I move right into an activity or a strategy - something that gets people thinking or trying something. One I often use is to write down their definition of creativity and I give them 30 seconds to do it. Then, I tell them to carve that definition down to a tweetable of 140 characters or less and I give them 20 seconds to do that. Then, I ask them to create a performance of that tweetable definition using any art form, but they only get 15 seconds to create it. If we're in person, I have them perform it. If it's online, I share my definition and ask them to tweet out their definition using a hashtag. I'm specifically giving them an activity and a next step when it's over. That activity should in some way be related to my topic for the day or lead me into my core message. For example, in that creativity definition activity, I almost always use that as a segue into a session on what is STEAM? We talk about the idea that the activity gave no right or wrong answers and that while there was freedom to create, it was with the constraints of time. I use that as a way to lead into the definition of STEAM and how that can be used in the classroom. I then present my core information with some actionable steps, showing pictures when I can or videos of student work and then offering a simple framework or process for putting it into practice in their classroom. This kind of session outline always works really well, it has a nice pacing and gives people a chance to become active learners. Definitely steal this process for your own PD - it works!

Final Thoughts

Congratulations! You've now completed this whole sprint - what an incredible job! Now, as always, there's a workbook for you to download today and I think it's going to be really helpful as you plan out your sprint project. In your workbook, you'll find the engaging PD framework I just shared and some space for you to outline your own PD session for your sprint project. Use this as a way to help you get started and flesh out some of the ideas knocking around in your head. Once you've done that, go on over to the sprint project area, watch that video and be sure to download the steps you need to create your PD video for this project. I can't wait to see what you create!