

CENTRAL VALLEY FOUNDATION

Lessons Learned - Giving Teachers More Time & Tools

The number one request from teachers is (more) time for planning, dialogue and learning. We are most fortunate that we are able to provide the additional time for learning to improve as a result of this project.

– Tanya Goosev, Asst. Supt., Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District

With the expanded demands of the new state standards, as well as California's change to new English Language Development (ELD) standards for English Learners, teachers are asking for more opportunities to work together to strengthen their teaching skills, design robust lessons and analyze student performance data.

This may be especially true when teachers have a large proportion of English Learners (ELs) in their classrooms. In the Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District (COJUSD), where about half of students are ELs, they are implementing creative new ways to give teachers more time – and more tools – for the kind of collaborative learning that teachers want, and that elevate instructional practices.

The district has adapted the Japanese "lesson study" process, with the support of ELA/ELD consultants from Tulare County Office of Education, whereby teachers jointly design, observe, evaluate and refine lesson plans during designated times. One hundred percent (100%) of its K-8 teachers and 87% of grade 9-12 teachers have participated in lesson study. The focus has been on *academic discourse* (putting words and sentences together to communicate complex ideas) and instructional practices to fully engage EL students. Additional release time (including some Saturday work sessions) has afforded teachers the time needed to analyze new standards and plan focused lessons.

Towards this, an "actionable feedback tool" was developed with teacher input that provides teachers with specific feedback to improve students' academic conversations with an emphasis on increasing the participation of EL students in classroom discussions.

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Professional development “on demand” takes place through the support of on-site coaches and during monthly extended learning time. Late-start Wednesdays are devoted to building professional learning communities (PLCs) where teachers have the opportunity to collaborate to improve student learning. In addition, Instructional Rounds, where teams of teachers, coaches and administrators observe learning in action, has become the most powerful professional development tool.