

Final Paper PITP

HTH GSE

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EDU 615: Facilitating Adult Learning

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Notes: The name of the faculty member, the school, and other identifying people/places have been changed in the piece below to preserve confidentiality.

System Analysis

Wausau West High School is developed and guided by four design principles which are equity, personalization, authentic work, and collaborative design. Through these four design principles, Wausau West High School is able to set its aspirational goals and create a foundation of understanding towards its approach.

From these design principles, the school, grade-level teams, and individual teachers are able to work collaboratively and design a curriculum/project that adheres to all students' learning capacities. When it comes to equity, the goal is to have each teacher work to address inequities and help students reach their full potential. As for personalization, the goal is to have teachers use an inclusive approach that supports and challenges each student. Regarding the idea behind authentic work, the goal is to have teachers create projects or learning that allows the integration of students' experiences and identity, which in turn lead to the creation of beautiful, authentic work. The last design principle is a collaborative design. I believe this principle is the core that binds all the ideas and principles together. The goal of this principle is to create an environment that welcomes teachers and students as co-designers working collaboratively in designing projects and curriculum with students' experience and voice.

In order for me to know what some of my colleagues are struggling with, I conducted an empathy interview with a colleague of mine who is the English Coordinator at Wausau West High School. Before engaging in the interview, I had to make sure that I created a safe atmosphere for our conversation so that the conversation would transpire into an authentic meaningful dialogue. Listening is a magnetic and strange thing, a creative force. The friends who

listen to us are the ones we move forward. When we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold and expand (Menninger, 1942 as cited in Aguilar, 2013, p. 148). I realize that by setting these norms, my colleague felt more comfortable with the interview and more willing to share her thoughts. What I gathered from our interview was that my colleague feels a lack of support from the administration when it comes to reaching out and supporting her Latinx family engagement committee. Another area of concern or struggle that was mentioned by my colleague was not feeling validated or appreciated. Currently, we have various professional learning opportunities being offered/facilitated by other colleagues of mine addressing social injustice, pandemic, and anti-racist work. In my conversation with my colleague, I asked if some of the professional learning that is offered/facilitated are useful to her current work. She replied that most do not really help, so she seeks other avenues or platforms to gain access to professional learnings that help her in her current work.

My role at my organization involves helping and educating all of our students regarding the importance of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. I am in constant dialogue with them. Some areas of needs expressed by students are belongingness, mindfulness, access to a safe space, voices being heard, and being seen. Based on reports from the California School Dashboard from 2017 through 2019, the report shows similar trends with patterns of success in the areas of academic engagement and academic performance, but a decline in the area of college/career and an increase in the area of conditions and climate.

CALIFORNIA SCHOOL DASHBOARD

Indicator: Academic Performance and Engagement			
Student Group	2019	2018	2017
English Language Arts (All Students)	20 points above standard (increased 9.3 points)	10.7 points above standard (declined 57.2 points)	No Data
Mathematics (All Students)	70.7 points below standard (declined 3.5 points)	67.1 points below standard (declined 56.6 points)	No Data
English Learners Progress	66.7% making progress toward ELP	No Data	71.4% making progress toward ELP
Graduation Rate	95.5% graduated	94.4% graduated (declined 4.9%)	92.6% graduated (declined 1.9%)
College/Career	77.6% prepared (Declined 8.5%)	86% prepared (increased 12.1%)	79.3% prepared

Indicator: Conditions and Climate (Suspension Rate)			
Student Group	2019	2018	2017
All Students	3.2 % suspended at least once (increased 0.3%)	2.8 % suspended at least once (increased 1.6%)	1.2 % suspended at least once (declined 1.2%)

Collegial Coaching

Victoria is the English Coordinator at Wausau West High School. She has been at the school for nine years. Prior to coming to Wausau West High School, she worked as an educational specialist in El Paso, Texas for twelve years. Victoria is not only passionate about her students but also makes sure that they get the support they need in reaching their true potential and accomplishments. Victoria has two main concerns for her students: the feeling that her students cannot work in collaborative groups without proper scaffolding or resources and wondering whether or not her students are being fully supported in taking on the academic language, the

ability to verbalize, evaluate, and articulate what is being taught. There is a period she feels has a more difficult time being broken into small groups and doing collaborative work.

Through our conversation, we decided that I would attend this period with her to observe how her students are grouped and to watch the interactions not only between her students and other students but also between teacher and students. The reason for this was to be able to decipher if students were able to take on the work themselves because they were able to work collaboratively and learn from each other (purposefully grouped), or perhaps the grouping was unsuccessful and the teacher is in need of rethinking her grouping strategies.

In order for my coaching techniques or moves to have a positive impact, I made sure I created a safe and secure environment by beginning the conversation with several personal questions. For example, I asked, “How are you doing?, How is your week going so far?” In addition to the personal questions, I feel I created a safe and secure environment by stating, “Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me. I believe this is a positive experience for both of us where we can learn from each other through a meaningful conversation around students”. When we exercise courage to set and act on goals that are connected to principles and conscience, we tend to achieve positive results. Over time, we create an upward spiral of confidence and courage. Our commitment becomes stronger than our moods. We build the courage to set increasingly challenging, even heroic goals” (O’Neil & Conzemius, 2006 as cited in Aguilar, 2013, p. 121). I believe this lent to creating a safe and secure environment because I wanted her to know we are in this together, that I am not there to make her feel siloed and on the spot. I demonstrated active listening when I made continual eye contact with Victoria not only as I spoke, but also while she spoke. As she spoke, I nodded in agreement and smiled at her when I

liked what she was saying because I agreed or thought it was a positive discussion, as in a validation.

It was essential that I paraphrased what Victoria stated so that she felt listened to and to ensure that any clarification happened if I heard wrong. It was important that I let her know that I heard her correctly. A time when I did this was when I was unclear about what she meant when she stated, “The system is broken and they just don’t care.” Even though I felt like I knew what she meant, I wanted to make sure because she might have a different meaning. I re-stated what she said, but also asked a clarifying question. “You stated that the system is broken and that they just don’t care. Could you help me to understand what you mean by this, but also explain the reason behind this thought?” I believe this was a useful question because not only did I not understand, but I also felt like if she made it such a point of telling me about how she felt there had to be more to the story.

In order to get clarification and more specific details, I asked probing questions. For example, I asked Victoria what steps and suggestions have you made to your team in supporting your English language learner students? Victoria replied “pairing them with students that can support them academically” and “attend to the socially struggling students”. I probed and asked her to dig deeper into that when I asked, “What was your thinking here when you suggested having your students paired with stronger students?” I also asked, “How is this working for your students?”

After going through this coaching experience, I find that reinforcing praise is important. The way I see it is that if you are going to give reinforcing praise, the specific feedback of a job well done, you need to paraphrase and reiterate what was already said in a conversation. An example of me giving reinforcing praise during the meeting was when Victoria described the

culture of her students' classroom and how she was able to recommend what her students' different needs were. My praise was "I really like the way that you know what your students' needs are; you know which of your students need higher academic support and social support. That is commendable." I think it was extremely important that I gave specific feedback in order for Victoria to know exactly what is praise-worthy and, at the same time, show her that I had been actively listening.

As I reflect on this coaching experience, there are many things I think about. First of all, when I think about my personal skills in this conversation, I believe I made Victoria feel at ease through some coaching moves I used such as creating a safe/secure environment, practicing active listening, paraphrasing, probing, and reinforcing praise. I believe I allowed her to express what she needed or wanted to express as I dug deeper into the questions through facilitative coaching skills without any of the common roadblocks in communication. By this I mean I did not lecture, threaten, order, judge, or diagnose. I allowed her the opportunity to reflect and become thoughtful through the questions I asked. It is imperative that as a coach, before entering the space of coaching one's implicit biases need to be checked at the door. "Masterful coaches inspire people by helping them recognize the previously unseen possibilities that lay embedded in their existing circumstances" (Hargrove, 2003 as cited in Aguilar, 2013, p.165).

Lastly, as I reflect on how this exercise relates to this class, it is crucial to remember the principles of coaching and adult learning and not to fall prey to being a bureaucratic administrator, but rather a professional administrator that is respectful and makes decisions based on best practices. That being said, I believe this coaching exercise lends itself to raising Victoria's consciousness to talk through her own thinking. As stated by Aguilar (2013), it is the

responsibility of a coach in any capacity to help his/her client to interrupt behaviors, beliefs, or being which are not leading to transformation (p.202).

Designing and Facilitating Professional Learning

With my current role as the social and emotional development specialist for all grade levels on my campus, as well as the supervisor for our academic coaches; I chose to design and facilitate professional learning that I felt addressed some of the conflicts expressed to me during my conversations with students, teachers, and colleagues. At the same time, as it is imperative that my approach is thoughtful and mindful, I had to make sure before I engaged in any form of dialogue or professional learning that I incorporated our school system analysis principles into how I shaped and developed the learning process.

The area of conflict I chose to focus on for professional learning for our academic coaches was how to engage in authentic dialogue when dealing with certain behaviors. Also, in creating the agenda, I made sure the norms adhered to a sense of trust and belongingness even though we have a previously established relational trust. As stated by Aguilar (2013), knowing about each other's histories, backgrounds, values, beliefs, hopes and dreams, skills and abilities, and fears and concerns is important (p. 42).

Before moving forward with professional learning with my staff, I had an opportunity to present my ideas and plan with a few cohorts from this class. I believe having this opportunity beforehand was really beneficial to how I facilitate this professional learning. In our conversation, I was able to state and give clarity on what the objective was and how I was planning on delivering the learning. This, in turn, resulted in having an authentic dialogue with

constructive feedback and suggestions which I incorporated into my professional learning preparation.

Before engaging in what we planned for the day and in order for the team to feel safe and comfortable, I started the presentation with personal check-ins to see where we were and how we were doing. Once done, I then proceeded with our agenda for the day (see appendix A). I gave instructions on what we were about to do, as well as the expectations. I told the team that they would journal for about 20 minutes through any platform they feel comfortable with and after we would reconvene and move into dyads to share their story/experience and take time to notice similarities and differences for when these different topics and lenses became apparent in each other's stories and how it affects our biases and relationships. As stated by Aguilar (2013), adults come to the learning process with a wide range of previous experiences, knowledge, interests, and competencies (p. 190). In order to push their thinking and make their dyad conversations authentic, I prompt the team with a reflective question “as an individual reflect on your experience when you encountered a certain behavior (distractions, disengagement, anxiety, and depression) from a student/individual and how you dealt with it”. We reconvened as a group after the dyad conversations to discuss how it went, what it felt like, and what similarities and notices they had. Once everyone shared out, we had a little break and reconvened to reflect more, talk about the next steps, and I shared a resource with them.

In the conclusion of the presentation, I engaged in dialogue with the team wanting to know how they felt about the process and what feedback they had for me. According to Aguilar (2013), inviting feedback is a step towards shifting culture and creating learning organizations (p.232). In their feedback, they shared their appreciation of how I started the presentation with a personal check-in to see how they were before moving into what the agenda for the day would

be. They felt that created a sense of calmness and understanding that they matter. They also expressed an appreciation for the prompts given in relation to journaling their experience and providing an opportunity to share with another colleague their stories and vice versa.

In reflecting on the whole process of facilitating the presentation of learning, I learned that it is imperative to include others you trust or that share the same aspiration and ideas about plans, and, importantly, you have to be open and acceptable to constructive feedback. I think having the opportunity to engage in dialogue with a few classmates from this cohort gave me the opportunity to push my thinking and my “Why.” My overall goal was to make the presentation impactful and transformational and, gathering from the feedback I got from the team, it seems it did that. If you want to change the culture, you have to change the conversation (Showkeir & Showkeir, 2008 as cited in Aguilar, 2003 p.143).

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Appendix A

[Presentation of Learning Agenda](#)