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**TO:** TBD

**FROM:** Jacksonville Public Education Fund, on behalf of Teacher Roundtable  
Steering Committee and Participants

**DATE:** TBD

**RE:** Results from the Fall 2015 Teacher Roundtables

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The Jacksonville Public Education Fund has supported teacher leadership in many ways ranging from highlighting the best teachers through the EDDY Awards to involving teachers in ONE by ONE conversation to mobilize community action to funding innovation grants and much more. Teachers connected to this work have asked the organization to provide a safe space to have deeper conversations about critical issues facing educators.

This gave birth to the Teacher Roundtable, which elevates the voices of teachers in community and district discussions about improving public education, supports teachers in being their own advocates and connects teacher leaders to the community through speaking engagements and other opportunities. This initiative is teacher-led by a Steering Committee composed of several current and former teachers of the year. The events are open to all public school teachers in Duval County.

The fall series of the Teacher Roundtable has focused on professional development. This comes at a critical time where national trends are indicating that current teacher professional development throughout the country is insufficiently effective. A 2015 report from The New Teacher Project found “that despite enormous and admirable investments of time and money ... the evidence base for what actually helps teachers improve is very thin.”

#### **Moving from Conversation to Action**

To tackle this issue, teachers in the Teacher Roundtable held two robust conversations in the fall. First they brainstormed key topics within professional development and then prioritized their ideas and turned them into belief statements and action steps. The summaries from the discussion are attached.



**The teachers identified three key areas for improvement:**

- Professional development works best when teachers have strong roles in identifying and selecting opportunities. It is important that teachers proactively work in collaboration with the school district and community to identify needs and pursue professional development that supports those needs. We highly value professional development that is selected and led by teachers, and is also high-quality, differentiated, organized, and balances county initiatives with teachers' personal professional goals.
- More collaborative and proactive decision-making and responsibility-sharing among teachers, coaches and administrators is needed to improve professional development. One important way to foster this conversation is to increase transparency and clarity about how professional development is funded, supported and regulated on a teacher and school level.
- Using time effectively is key to ensuring high quality professional development. That includes reallocating early dismissal days to full-day, quality professional development, ensuring that teachers have access to differentiated and self-selected professional development, and planning ahead so that roll out timeline for new material is realistic for trainers and teachers.

Teachers also discussed tangible, proactive ways these possibilities could inform the way professional development occurs in the district, schools and personally for all teachers. Those ideas are also attached in the Part B notes.

**Next Steps**

Through the conversations, it became apparent that participants wanted to share these ideas and ask these critical questions to the other stakeholders in the district. In December, Teacher Roundtable participants met with Christine Dahnke, Executive Director of Professional Development, Altina Fenelon-Silva, Professional Development Specialist, to ask questions and share ideas with one another.

Based on the conversation, these areas emerged as some initial key steps that could lead to a broader effort to improve professional development, teacher leadership and better instruction for all students:

- **Dramatically increase transparency and communication between the district and teachers about the current processes and long-term vision for professional development.**
  - This became abundantly clear when it emerged that most teachers participating in the Roundtable — who are extremely “plugged in” — were unaware that coaches constituted



professional development, let alone its place as the number one budget item within that department.

- **Separate the Professional Development Facilitator (PDF) and MINT Coordinator roles.**
  - Due to the movement toward more school-based Professional Development, the job of PDF has become increasingly important and complex. Therefore the two roles, PDF and MINT Coordinator, need to be separated and very thoughtfully filled and stipend.
  - Clarify the job descriptions for these two roles and emphasize to principals the importance of finding the right teacher to fulfill these roles.
- **Expand the district's teacher leadership strategy as a way of improving professional development.**
  - Many of the conversations revolved around how teachers could get involved in improving professional development at the school level (such as being more involved in the planning and execution of early release Wednesdays, peer coaching and the creation and implementation of the School Improvement Plan).
  - Building the district's teacher leadership capacity would not only improve professional development but also serve as an important vehicle for retaining the district's best teachers.
  - This is a strategy recommended in the TNTP report on professional development.
  - Consider starting a Duval ECET2 through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Jacksonville Public Education Fund is committed to help with that work.

We know that the first step toward identifying gaps can be to catalogue existing opportunities. As an organization committed to recognizing and elevating excellent educators in Duval County, the Jacksonville Public Education Fund looks forward to working with Duval County Public Schools to empower a task force to create a Guide to Teacher Leadership in Duval County.

With a better understanding of priorities public school teachers share, it is our hope that local leaders will see these ideas and the Teacher Roundtable as a resource as they work together to bring about improvements to our public schools with a goal of ensuring that all students and teachers meet their full potential. The Teacher Roundtable Steering Committee and Jacksonville Public Education Fund staff would welcome any opportunity to meet to share more findings or discuss opportunities for next steps. Teachers in this movement would be happy to be considered as a resource for focus groups or any other teacher feedback mechanism that the district is considering.



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Our hope is that this is the beginning of a broader conversation about how to make professional development as effective as possible while also seeing it as an opportunity to contribute to the district's broad priority of recruiting, retaining and developing the best teachers and leaders. As our nation is facing a trend of ineffective, time-consuming and costly professional development that is not showing the desired impacts for its teachers, and at a time when many teachers are feeling the strain of change and lack of support this is an opportune time to consider the opinions of highly engaged teacher leaders.

For more information about the Teacher Roundtable, including past memos, visit [jaxpef.org/TeacherRoundtable](http://jaxpef.org/TeacherRoundtable).

The Teacher Roundtable Participants and Steering Committee, along with the staff and board of Jacksonville Public Education Fund, would like to commend you for your efforts to engage public school teachers around this important work. We offer our support in anyway possible to continue building on this positive relationship between the school district and its outstanding teachers.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts on this report.

Attachments:

Teacher Roundtable Conversation Summary from September 16, 2015

Teacher Roundtable belief statements & actions from October 10, 2015

Teacher Roundtable action meeting notes from December 14, 2015



## Teacher Roundtable – Professional Development, Part B

### September 19 Table Discussion Summary of Responses

#### Question 1. What does professional development mean to you?

Professional development...

- is focused on the professional to hone their craft and take ownership of what they're doing
- is provided in a variety of ways: peer learning, books you read, conferences you've attended, mandated district/building level, etc.
- is meaningful and differentiated - take into consideration school culture, teachers' level of expertise, recent changes in teachers, demographics of the school
- is lead by well-trained, knowledgeable professional - this includes other teachers, teacher leaders, mentors, local experts (colleges of education)
- includes the appropriate time frames - within the school day and outside of it (early release days, grade level meetings, content level meetings, coaching, teacher academies, conferences, PLC, etc.)
- mandated
- self-selected, individualized
- is based on needs assessment that includes teachers' voices
- recognizes teachers as professionals

#### Question 2: What is working well in existing Professional Development?

- when real collaboration is taking place - where there is a clear spoken sequence of plans that everyone has communicated about (allow conversations about the work, involve teacher input, driven by the needs - student and teacher)
- when professional development is the result of a needs assessment
- opportunities for self-selected cross-curricular trainings (for example, being allowed to go to conferences - in or out of the district)
- well planned PLC opportunities, along with DTU trainings
- when teachers are allowed to have meaningful and authentic teacher-to-teacher mentorship, coaching and team building opportunities
- when the trainer is well-prepared, knowledgeable and knows their audience



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-when collaborating efforts are used with local colleges of education

Question 3: What would you change in the existing PD you receive?

- Shift the deficit mindset to an empowerment mindset where teachers are valued (eliminate fear-based culture, provide enrichment instead of remediation, respect teachers' wisdom)
- Create consistent and organized partnerships with external organizations (especially local colleges of education)
- More time OR better use of the current time
- More resources for PD
- Appropriate timing for the PD (when it takes place, as well as time for roll out)
- Create a long term scope and sequence for PD and provide consistent follow-up opportunities and allow for flexibility
- Transparency and clarification about the process of decision-making in regards to PD and allow teachers to be part of that decision-making process (school by school needs assessment)
- More equitable PD opportunities for all schools throughout the district
- PD needs to be pertinent to the current needs of the schools

Question 4: What needs to happen next in regards to Professional Development?

- Clear information about the process of PD creation and decision-making at the district and school level
- PD that incorporates and values teacher-teacher interactions (modeling, observations, discussions, and collaboration)
- Review evaluation and feedback tools for PD - let teachers really provide proactive, reflective feedback about the learning opportunities they receive
- A needs assessment per each school that reflects the real learning needs of the teachers
- more opportunities for quality, self-selected, pertinent PD for teachers seeking more knowledge and practice (ex. funding for conferences, encouraging teachers to seek and explore PD opp.)

Who needs to hear this?

-Local colleges of education, Dr. Vitti & school board, the people responsible for PD both at the district and school level, local businesses and organizations that are willing to offer grants and opportunities for teachers, Chamber of Commerce...



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## **Teacher Roundtable - September/October Topic: Professional Development Belief Statements & Actions**

### Statement 1: Types of Professional Development

Professional development works best when teachers have strong roles in identifying and selecting opportunities. It is important that teachers proactively work in collaboration with the school district and community to identify needs and pursue professional development that supports those needs. We highly value professional development that is selected and led by teachers, and is also high-quality, differentiated, organized, and balances county initiatives with teachers' personal professional goals.

#### *Contributing statements:*

We the people of DCPS believe the types of PD should be self-selected and balanced between county initiatives and professional goals.

We believe the teachers should be the voice in determining the types of PD that are pertinent.

Teacher collaboration on current needs (self-selected)

Teacher leader facilitators (teachers teaching teachers)

We believe in providing balanced and diverse opportunities for teachers to participate in professional development that is empowering, relevant, organized and high quality. This includes collaboration in the school district and community level.

We believe teachers should be provided with more opportunities for quality, self-selected, pertinent, well-planned PD.

Teachers have a role in their own professional learning, and must take action to procure opportunities for growth.



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### Statement 2: Decision-making for Professional Development

More collaborative and proactive decision-making and responsibility-sharing among teachers, coaches and administrators is needed to improve professional development. One important way to foster this conversation is to increase transparency and clarity about how professional development is funded, supported and regulated on a teacher and school level.

*Contributing statements:*

We believe that the teachers and DCPS should share responsibilities in the creation and implementation of pre-planned, quality professional development that provides multiple opportunities for practice and support.

Transparency & clarity about the way PD is funded, supported and regulated on a teacher and school level

We believe that the teachers and DCPS should share responsibilities in the creation and implementation of pre-planned, quality, professional development that provides multiple opportunities for practice and support.

We believe teachers should be empowered to select and attend professional development in various locations for personal/professional growth.

We believe in collaboration among teachers, coaches and administrators. When proactively planning and implementing short and long range professional development that creates ownership; identifies, cultivates and utilizes "talent"; and encourages active partnership for all to have an active role with decision-making!

Since educators are held to providing differentiated instruction within classrooms for students, then those who provide professional development for teachers should be held equally responsible for differentiating delivery, content, etc.

### Statement 3: Time and Trainers of Professional Development

Using time effectively is key to ensuring high quality professional development. That includes re-allocating early



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dismissal days to full-day, quality professional development, ensuring that teachers have access to differentiated and self-selected professional development, and planning ahead so that rollout timeline for new material is realistic for trainers and teachers.

*Contributing statements:*

We can't give "amazing" if we do not receive "amazing."

Powers that be should provide time for school based trainers to study, learn and prepare and be respectful of a timeframe that goes from learning to implementation to review.

We believe that early dismissal days are ineffective use of PD time, in addition to limiting instructional time.

We believe that time is a finite and valuable resource. Therefore, it is imperative that we plan PD that honors our time by creating flexible and differentiated options for the most efficient use of such time to best empower our educators and serve our students.



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## Teacher Roundtable– Part C

### Action Meeting Notes

### Bridging the Gap in Professional Development

#### Questions & comments from Participants

#### Table 1:

What steps do principals take to become better instructional leaders?

How can district specialists become better instructional leaders?

“Research says...” – Where did research say teachers want PD at the school level (embedded)?

Would you be willing to find out who did PD at the Schultz Center and reach out to them or try how PD was done then (PD= pedagogy)?

What is the difference between In-Service Day and Early Release PD?

What are the Exit Questions from teachers leaving the district revealing??

#### Long term planning:

Consistency

Stop coming in with “gotcha” mentality

Refine, update and clarify the job descriptions of Principal and/or Asst Principal

#### What can we do today?

Advocate

Reach out to those who gave PD at Schultz and see what and why teachers liked that PD—

Hands on

Left with something



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Academy of Math

Academy of Science

Collaboration with other teachers at other schools

Table 2:

Need of clarification – A math and reading coach at every school?? This is not the case with Math Coaches

How can the district address PD collaboration for a specific need – ex. lack of support personnel?

We need to request and district needs to provide better communication (directly to the teacher) re. opportunities, information (TDE, etc.), conferences. \*As professionals we can be advocates and proactive!

\*Schultz Center concept – have available to teachers

Table 3:

Is PDF same as MINT leader? If so, these roles need to be separated

→ PDF: PD at the school level Head Mentor: in charge of MINT responsibilities

Is Early Release our only teacher leadership opportunity?

How can we facilitate teachers learning more about independent study/travel\$/work?

How do we incentivize teachers to step up and present PD?

How can we do a better job evaluating and utilizing the use of PLC/Early Release as school-level PD?

SIP / Master Plan is too vague and big of a beast. We may need to re-evaluate how those are used realistically.

**Comments from Panel**

Notes from Christine's comments:



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New this year, monthly district PD Calendar is send to Principals.

After meeting with JPEF and reviewing Belief Statements, I realized we have a communication problem.

Christine recommends to teachers looking to be leaders to...

1. Talk to principal with ideas
2. SIP team
3. SAC needs more teacher voices
4. Utilize common plan time

Schultz Center PD shifted into embedded PD →

1. Coaches, where most of the PD funding gets put
2. PDF (teacher voice on the leadership team to plan school-level PD)

Master In-Service plan →

Tier 1 is State PD

Tier 2 is Professional Growth & Recertification

MINT Program is an avenue of teacher leadership.

Technology is the solution to teacher retention - using Blackboard as a collaborative tool.

Notes from Altina's comments:

Principal training is content/instructional learning – a shift from building leaders to instructional leaders, but how/what does this look like?

Your school is your community. Teachers need to take ownership of each other and help each other (mentoring is a real avenue for teacher leadership that is not being fully utilized).



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What stood out to Altina in the Memo: Raising teachers' voices – a movement BY teachers.

Mechanism of PDF is in place BUT the reality is that it is often not used as a leadership role.