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40 East Adams Street
Suite 110
Jacksonville, FL 32202

TO: Dr. Nikolai Vitti
FROM: Jacksonville Public Education Fund, on behalf of Teacher Roundtable
Steering Committee and Participants
DATE: July 15, 2016
RE: Results from the Spring Teacher Roundtable, Instructional Autonomy

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 Teacher Roundtable selects two topics per year, with a fall and spring series of events. The spring series of the Teacher Roundtable focused on Instructional Autonomy, a topic that is important to teachers locally but also across the country.

Moving from Conversation to Action

To tackle the issue of Instructional Autonomy, teachers in the Teacher Roundtable held two robust conversations in the spring. First teachers brainstormed key issues revolving around instructional autonomy and then prioritized these ideas and turned them into belief statements and action steps. The summaries from these discussions are attached.

The teachers identified four key areas for improvement and related action steps. These actions can impact



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how instructional autonomy is viewed, utilized and supported in our classrooms.

Differentiate for teachers

Just as teachers value the power of differentiation for our students' learning, so should the district value the power of differentiation in helping teachers — specific to discipline, grade-level, experience, efficacy, needs. We believe the lack of differentiation is a barrier to instructional autonomy because a one-size fits all approach to professional development and coaching is not working.

Actions:

- Train coaches on differentiated coaching - assessing teacher/school needs and modes of coaching.
 - As reflected in a 2013 report from the Center for Public Education, *Effective professional development in an Era of High Stakes Accountability*, professional development should distinguish teachers' dual roles as both technicians and intellectuals — each demanding a unique professional development interaction with the teacher.
- Increase the number of smaller, more specialized professional development sessions that are focused on specific grade-levels, disciplines, experience levels, etc.
- Train school administration on differentiation among faculty, how to support instructional autonomy and/or paths to instructional autonomy.
- Tap into the growing pool of teacher leaders as a means to accomplish teacher-to-teacher mentoring/support/professional development.
- As the district moves to a more school-based approach to professional development, the existing policies, procedures, and paperworks should be revised to facilitate differentiated/self-selected professional development.

Foster better culture/community among teachers and staff within each school

Just as we ask students to take ownership of their learning, we should create a school culture at every school that promotes teachers taking ownership of their own teaching and professional growth. We believe that the right balance of instructional autonomy — that holds teachers to high standards but also gives them the freedom to best meet their students' needs — goes hand-in-hand with trust and collaboration. We believe that this culture of trust should be an explicit goal of all interactions between district representatives, building administrators and classroom teachers.



Actions:

- Explore implementing professional development that is designed to build trust and team building among all school faculty, staff and administration.
 - Research existing student-focused “Challenge Day” events as a source of inspiration.
 - Integrate professional development or a PLC focused on professionalism, social behavior, emotional intelligence, building collegiality.
- Increase teacher-to-teacher professional development opportunities.
- Make instructional autonomy an explicit goal of school-based PLC’s in order to foster innovation and teacher leadership.

Improve the relationship between the district and the classroom

We believe the district/teacher relationship is a powerful one that works best when it is built on trust, not fear. Many barriers to instructional autonomy surface within the dynamics of the district-school-classroom relationship. The first step in this process will be to improve the relationship between district administrators, specialists and coaches, building level coaches and classroom teachers. With instructional autonomy being highly valued, the coach/teacher relationship should be created from the start as an inherently supportive partnership.

Actions:

- Restructure the recruitment of instructional coaches and specialists, doing whatever it takes (including supplements or pay benefits) to ensure these roles are being filled by highly qualified individuals and subject area experts.
- Provide better training for instructional coaches (building and district level) on how to meet the specific needs of their school(s) and teachers - how to differentiate and prioritize their coaching.
- The district should be more explicit and timely in communication to teachers and staff about the roll out of professional development, curriculum guides, and the roles of building level and regional level coaches.

Improve Curriculum Guides

We believe the Curriculum Guide is the foundation for what is to be taught; however, teachers should have the



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ability to work in concert with colleagues and administrators to modify and differentiate to maximize student learning. In addition, significant improvements to Curriculum Guides are needed to make them more usable in the 2016-2017 school year.

Actions:

- Have hard copies of the curriculum guides available by August 1 (including as much information as possible regarding assessments).
- Make the curriculum guides easier to find and download.
- Explore the possibility of making guides, materials, and resources on-line at the beginning of summer so teachers can study and prepare over the summer.
- Create a foreword that explains the intention and goal of each Curriculum Guide to boost understanding and in turn increase opportunities for instructional autonomy.
- Enhance the use of teacher leaders to review, create, and provide feedback for all curriculum guides.

Next Steps

Through the Teacher Roundtable conversations and action planning, it became apparent that participants wanted to share these ideas and ask these critical questions to the other stakeholders in the district. This month, a select group of the Teacher Roundtable participants will meet with Dr. Nikolai Vitti, Superintendent of Duval County Public Schools, to share ideas and ask questions regarding instructional autonomy.

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.

Our hope is that this is the beginning of a broader conversation about how to utilize, nurture and support instructional autonomy in the classroom, not only to increase student learning and well-being, but to retain and recruit the best teachers and leaders.



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For more information about the Teacher Roundtable, including past memos, visit jaxpef.org/TeacherRoundtable. In exit surveys of Teacher Roundtable participants, more than 85 percent say that participating makes them more likely to want to stay in the classroom.

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 May 7 (part A)

Teacher Roundtable prioritized action areas and specific ideas from May 7

Teacher Roundtable action meeting notes from June 11, 2016 (part B)



Teacher Roundtable Instructional Autonomy, Part A – May 2016 Conversation Summary

1. What is the ideal version of instructional autonomy and what does it look like ?

Table 1 –

Freedom of what to teach / Freedom of how to teach it

Guide – district does not tell you when (time) to teach it

Flexible – what to teach... differentiate for class students, not for district

CG is ready for teachers well before the timeframe

Flexibility to structure pacing in lesson

Compacting gifted and non-gifted

Appreciate different teaching styles

Kids having a say in how they learn

Trust that the teachers understand the needs of the students and the community

Table 2 –

Teacher skill/knowledge

Meeting the needs of the students

Tailor resources

Tweak order/ implementation

* have all materials at the beginning of the year

Flexible time / opportunities for remediation

No CG

Understanding that all teachers are not the same

Some need more support and training

Most are highly proficient

Differentiated teaching

Because not all teachers are the same – new vs. experienced

LISTEN to what the teachers know

LISTEN to what the teachers need in order to be effective

Differentiated training

Teacher-to-teacher conversations

Recognize teachers are professionals

Table 3 –

Owning your lessons to meet the needs of students

Curriculum Guide is a GUIDE

SUGGESTED activities

Accountability for teacher for quality of instruction

Autonomy before creativity

New teachers need structure 5 7 experienced teachers need flexibility

Accountability by data, peers, administration



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Teachers EARN the freedom

2. Barriers that limit your instructional autonomy...

Table 3 -

Administration perception on the CGs and CAST and knowledge of administration
Poor CGs, lack of availability of CG
Lack of time for planning
Content knowledge
Training and PD
Lack of trust/ micromanagement
Testing drives instruction
School grades
"school culture"

Table 2 -

District mandates
 Top down pressure
 Classroom visits
 Core subjects vs. music
Time
 CG pacing
 Remediate
 Testing grades
 A-B schedules
 Proctoring
School Culture / Leadership
 Turn around
Material delivery
 Not available at beginning of the year
 Modules
 Teachers Ed./ Resources
Computer-based everything
 Lack of computers
 Computer skills
When/How practice
FSA
 No creativity
 Timing
 Testing calendars
Equity 🚫 resources / autonomy
 Title 1 – extra personnel "stuff"
 Turnaround
 A/B schools – no extra personnel or stuff



More autonomy?

HS – Core subject vs electives

Table 1 –

Timeframe

Placement of teachers in and out of field

Switching teachers

Testing schedules

Lack of communication

Give clear instruction before school starts

CAST – fear of getting fired / CAST effected

Meeting requirement for performance pay (developing vs. needs improvement)

Taking into consideration...

Assembly, fire drills, bomb threats, death, testing, poverty, absences/tardies, wave dismissal, A/B days, early dismissals, fieldtrips, etc...

Honor PD for teachers as PDE during testing

Organic PD/PLC

3. What needs to happen in order to strengthen your Instructional Autonomy?

Table 1 –

Constructive criticism

Curriculum Guide on time

More reading specialist / proven coaches to help with CG (veteran teachers)

Watch out for yips – focus on how to improve

More frequent, informal observations to help in CAST needs

If district wants a certain teaching model used, then model that for teachers

Consistent across the board, not just specific schools

Communication!

Groups of teachers (by subject/grade) meet

Table 2-

Recognize that not all teachers are the same

Student home life barriers – ex. mobility, starting point, low performance, no support

District should support, not punitive

District needs to understand their schools...

Environments

Poverty

School grade is not an indicator of the school and what has happened all year

GOOD teachers teach in F schools

Autonomy is earned

Evaluation tool – not the same throughout the state / counties

No interventionist in the school

Table 3 -

The district should differentiate their support for schools

Teacher level



- Equity of resources
- Equity of support
- The districts should define autonomy (101 – value its power and effect on instruction)
- Provide focus groups for teacher input/suggestion for curriculum
- Teachers finding solutions
- Teacher generated resources
 - Bank of lessons (culture)
 - Resources for differentiation
 - Activities

4. Who needs to hear this message and how should they hear it?

Table 1 –

Vitti
Specialist who make CG
Specialists' bosses
Principals
People in the Chain of Command
FLDOE
Governor

Table 2 –

WHO?

Academic services

- Directors
- Specialists/ coaches

Principals
School Board/ Superintendent Vitti
Community (Funding)

- Mayor
- City Council

PTA

HOW?

Change mindset
Open

Table 3 –

WHO?

FLDOE
School Board
Community
District
Region Superintendent / DTO
Administrators (conferences at beginning of year)



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Teachers (Dept Chairs, TEACH Conference)
DTU

HOW?

Share information in conferences
Provide PD on Autonomy



Teacher Roundtable Instructional Autonomy Action Areas & Ideas

1. Differentiate for Teachers

...based on results, expectations, experience, knowledge-base and disposition

Data:

Flexible—what to teach... differentiate for class students, not for district

Appreciate different teaching styles

Teacher skill/knowledge

Understanding that all teachers are not the same

Some need more support and training

Most are highly proficient

Differentiated teaching

Because not all teachers are the same—new vs. experienced

New teachers need structure Ⓢ Ⓣ experienced teachers need flexibility

Accountability by data, peers, administration

Teachers EARN the autonomy (freedom)

Autonomy is earned

Content knowledge

Training and PD

Recognize that not all teachers are the same

Recognize placement of teachers in and out of field

Recognize the curve of switching teachers

The district should differentiate their support for schools

Teacher level

Equity of resources

Equity of support

2. Broken Curriculum Guides (CG)

...the foundation (baseline) is broken

Data:

Guide—district does not tell you when (time) to teach it

CG is ready for teachers well before the timeframe

Flexible time / opportunities for remediation

Flexibility to structure pacing in lesson

Poor CGs, lack of availability of CG

No CG

Timeframe

Material delivery

Not available at beginning of the year

Modules

Teachers Ed./ Resources

Curriculum Guide on time



Compacting gifted and non-gifted
Tailor resources
Tweak order/ implementation
 * have all materials at the beginning of the year
Curriculum Guide is a GUIDE
SUGGESTED activities
Administration perception on the CGs and CAST and knowledge of administration
Time
 CG pacing
 Remediate
 Testing grades
 A-B schedules
 Proctoring

3. **Relationship between the district and the classroom**

... Barrier to autonomy
... Trust vs. fear
... Clarify the Coach role and system: recruit, select, training, incentives, expectations, consistency

Data:

More reading specialist/ proven coaches to help with CG (veteran teachers)
District mandates
 Top down pressure
 Classroom visits
 Core subjects vs. music
Lack of trust/ micromanagement
If district wants a certain teaching model used, then model that for teachers
Consistent across the board, not just specific schools
Communication!
School grades
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 Lack of computers
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 Title 1 – extra personnel “stuff”
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 A/B schools – no extra personnel or stuff
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Testing drives instruction
FSA - No creativity ~ Timing ~ Testing calendars
Testing schedules
District should support, not punitive
District needs to understand their schools...
 Environments
 Poverty



School grade is not an indicator of the school and what has happened all year
GOOD teachers teach in F schools
Evaluation tool – not the same throughout the state / counties
No interventionist in the school
When/How practice

4. **Fostering Teacher Culture / Community**

...colleague/ support ~ Teacher-to-Teacher ~ Cultivate Autonomy

Data:

Trust that the teachers understand the needs of the students and the community

LISTEN to what the teachers know

LISTEN to what the teachers need in order to be effective

Differentiated training

Teacher-to-teacher conversations

Recognize teachers are professionals

Autonomy before creativity

“school culture”

School Culture / Leadership

Turn around

Lack of communication

Give clear instruction before school starts

CAST – fear of getting fired / CAST effected

Meeting requirement for performance pay (developing vs. needs improvement)

Taking into consideration...

Assembly, fire drills, bomb threats, death, testing, poverty, absences/tardies, wave dismissal, A/B days, early dismissals, fieldtrips, etc...

Meeting the needs of the students

Lack of time for planning

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Organic PD/PLC

Honor PD for teachers

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Bank of lessons (culture)

Resources for differentiation

Activities

Watch out for yips – focus on how to improve

More frequent, informal observations to help in CAST needs

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Student home life barriers – ex. mobility, starting point, low performance, no support

The district should define autonomy (101 – value its power and effect on instruction)

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Autonomy (freedom) of what to teach / Autonomy (freedom) of how to teach it



Teacher Roundtable- Instructional Autonomy Belief Statements and Action Steps

What is Instructional Autonomy?

Holding teachers to high standards and at the same time allowing appropriate professional discretion in making instructional decisions to best meet the needs of their students.

Action Area: Differentiate for teachers

Just as teachers value the power of differentiation for our students' learning, so should the district value the power of differentiation in helping teachers — specific to discipline, grade-level, experience, efficacy, needs. We believe the lack of differentiation is a barrier to instructional autonomy because a one-size fits all approach to PD and coaching is not working.

Action:

- Train coaches on differentiated coaching - assessing teacher/school needs and modes of coaching
As reflected in a 2013 report from the Center for Public Education, *Effective Professional Development in an Era of High Stakes Accountability*, professional development should distinguish teachers' dual roles as both technicians and intellectuals — each demanding a unique PD interaction with the teacher.
- Increase the number of smaller, more specialized PD sessions that are focused on specific grade-levels, disciplines, experience levels, etc...
- Train school administration on differentiation among faculty, how to support instructional autonomy and/or paths to instructional autonomy
- Tap into the growing pool of teacher leaders as a means to accomplish teacher-to-teacher mentoring/support/PD.
- As the district moves to a more school-based approach to PD (i.e., more emphasis on school-based coaching and PLC's rather than the Schultz Center), the existing policies, procedures, and paperwork should be revised to facilitate differentiated/self-selected PD

Action Area: Foster better culture / community among teachers and staff within each school

Just as we ask students to take ownership of their learning, we should create a school culture at every school that promotes teachers taking ownership of their own teaching and professional growth. We believe that the right balance of instructional autonomy — that holds teachers to high standards but also gives them the freedom to best meet their students' needs — goes hand-in-hand with trust and collaboration. We believe that this culture of trust should be an explicit goal of all interactions between district representatives (e.g., instructional coaches), building administrators and classroom teachers.

Action:

- Explore implementing PD that is designed to build trust and team building among all school faculty, staff and administration
 - Something like a "Challenge Day" for adults



- Another idea is PD or a PLC focused on professionalism, social behavior, emotional intelligence, building collegiality
- Increase teacher-to-teacher PD opportunities.
- Make instructional autonomy an explicit goal of school-based PLC's in order to foster innovation and teacher leadership.

Action Area: Improve the relationship between the district and the classroom

We believe the district/teacher relationship is a powerful one that works best when it is built on trust, not fear. Many barriers to instructional autonomy surface within the dynamics of the district-school-classroom relationship. The first step in this process will be to improve the relationship between district administrators, specialists and coaches, building level coaches and classroom teachers. With instructional autonomy being highly valued, the coach/teacher relationship should be created from the start as an inherently supportive partnership.

Action:

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- The district should be more explicit and timely in communication to teachers and staff about the rollout of PD, CGs and the roles of building level and regional level coaches.

Action Area: Broken Curriculum Guides

We believe the Curriculum Guide is the foundation for what is to be taught; however, teachers should have the ability to work in concert with colleagues and administrators to modify and differentiate to maximize student learning. In addition, significant improvements to Curriculum Guides are needed to make them more usable in the 2016-2017 school year.

Action:

- Have hard copies of the curriculum guides by Aug 1st (including as much information as possible regarding assessments).
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- Explore the possibility of making guides, materials, and resources on-line at the beginning of summer so teachers can study and prepare over the summer.
- Create a foreword that explains the intention and goal of each CG to boost understanding and in turn increase opportunities for instructional autonomy.
- Enhance the use of teacher leaders to review, create, and provide feedback for all CGs.



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