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What attracted you to the Teach Plus TLPN program?

The possibility of growing as a teacher-leader was very attractive to me. I am constantly pushing myself to be better and want to set an example for other teachers. Also, our school had been using a PLC approach during our weekly professional development times, and it was exciting to see that there was an organization willing to train teachers to run PLCs in an effective, meaningful way within their schools.

What course(es) are you currently leading and/or have led through this program?

For the last two years at I have been a PLC leader for grades 4 and 5 at my school, Synergy Charter Academy Elementary School in LAUSD. This year we are working collectively to improve our instructional practices around the subject of math, which, in turn, will enhance our students' growth and achievement

Why did you choose this particular topic(s)? What classroom experience do you bring to it?

Our school is slowly changing our approach to math instruction, using Cognitively-Guided Instruction (CGI). Most of the staff has been trained. Our goal is to guide students to use approaches to solve real-world problems in a way that makes sense to them. We are using Kagan Cooperative Strategies In conjunction with the CGI approach to maximize student interaction and accountability while allowing multiple opportunities for students to verbalize what they learned or strategies they used.

What type of coaching did you receive from Teach Plus? How did this coaching help you in developing and facilitating the course?

The coaching I received has been very individualized, which is extremely beneficial. I've had several video calls with Teach Plus coach Jaime Dusingberre and have been able to explain scenarios that are unique to my PLC and we have been able to bounce ideas of one another. Her advice has given me confidence that am I making correct decisions and moving my PLC along at an appropriate pace.

Can you describe the facilitation experience that you led? What were the participants' reactions?

The facilitation that I am currently leading consists of myself and my fellow 4th grade teaching partner, two 5th grade teachers, and an instructional assistant who works in one of the 5th grade rooms. Everyone has reacted positively to the structure provided by the Teach Plus training. We all know that everything we do in the training is to improve our teaching, which will impact our students.

Did the course participants use the strategies they learned to change their practice? If so, how?

We are still in the process of making our way through the problem-solving cycle, but I can say that we are confident in trying to improve specific instructional practices. I'd like to take it to the next level and start observing each other in action. If we only live in our own "bubble," we are not opening ourselves up to constructive criticism and the ability to grow.

What were some of your own learnings and takeaways from the TLPL experience?

Well, I am not done with the TLPL experience, but I can tell you that thus far that I appreciate the ability to have “face time” with a coach. I also know understand what PLC is actually supposed to achieve and how they are supposed to do it.

How does this PD differ from the PD you generally participate in through your school/district?

This PD is different because I'm the one planning it, it's ongoing and relevant, it keeps us on our toes and accountable and most importantly, its effects directly impact the kids.

What has been the effect of this work on your own classroom practice? Do you feel that you've become a better teacher by participating in Teach Plus TLPL?

I have always had extremely high expectations for myself and I am constantly revising materials or the way I am doing something based on student feedback and my own observations. However, this process has made me focus deeper on a few specific things as opposed to trying to be stellar at EVERYTHING!

How would you describe your professional growth in becoming a teacher leader to your peers?

I think my growth is finding a balance between being “friends” and being a “leader” in the work setting. It can be challenging to play both roles simultaneously.

Would you encourage other teachers to take part in Teach Plus TLPL?

Yes, I would. The number of years you've been teaching doesn't mean you're necessarily a standout. I try to show is that I'm always willing to take risks and tackle a challenge. I don't always have the answer or know what to do and I'm willing to take advice from my peers. I also know when I need to reach out to someone like a Teach Plus coach to vet my ideas or ask for advice. Regardless of your experience, a leader should always be willing to be open to learn more and do better.

If all PD were teacher-led, what effect would it have on the profession as a whole?

If it were done correctly, meaningful, and there was teacher “buy-in,” I think teacher-led PD could be very impactful. As a whole, I think teachers would be more vested in the PD and could find great satisfaction in working towards a common goal with their peers.