

Investigators of Practice

Teachers as Researchers

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Dr. Tim Kaltenecker

Ms. Barbara O'Connell

Ms. Joanna Lewick

Ms. Barbara Barthelmes

Ms. Laura Borneman

Ms. Nicole Cavalieri

Background

- *Investigators of Practice* was launched through the teacher evaluation system as an option for professional growth.
- The “classroom action research” course was created in 2009 with an expert consultant.
- The goal of the course was to provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate on classroom research regarding their practice.

Background, *continued*

- Since 2009, 73 teachers and administrators have participated in the course. (27 have participated more than once.)
- Barbara O’Connell was selected and trained to facilitate the course in 2012.
- Currently, we have 50 “published” research summaries on our website as a result of *Investigators of Practice*.

What is *Effective* Professional Development?

- Designed to improve teaching practices as measured by student performance.
- Related to district and school improvement goals.
- Related to teacher's current assignment and instructional needs.
- Involves collaboration with colleagues.

Effective Professional Development, *continued*

- Directed by teachers themselves, and includes teacher self-assessment and feedback from colleagues.
- Driven by data.
- Supported by the administration.

What is Action Research?

"The truly successful teachers are those who constantly and systematically reflect on their actions and the consequences of those actions. This constant reflection results in the acquisition of new knowledge as it pertains to the teaching and learning process."

-- Mertler, 2009, p. 21

Action Research Is:

- A systematic structure to determine the instructional methods that work best in one's classroom.
- A reflective process.
- A collaborative process.

The Stages of Action Research

- Planning and designing a research question
- Studying the literature
- Taking action
- Collecting data
- Reflecting on the action in light of the data
- Taking more action and collecting data
- Analysis and reflection

What Impact Does it Have?

From a study of Investigators of Practice conducted by Diane Cunningham, August 2014.

- Positively impacts teacher knowledge, practices and beliefs.
- Improves learner-centered practices, use of data, and use of professional research.
- Increases teacher reflection on practice.
- Increases teachers' willingness to reach out to colleagues.
- Creates ongoing researchers after the course.

“...a collaborative and professional culture is at work in Byram Hills.... Teachers speak about collaboration, safety, and choice as essential to professional learning and to their success. They also point to administrative support in the form of encouragement, respect, flexibility, and allocation of resources as essential.”

-- Diane Cunningham

