

Phi Delta Kappa

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RE-KAPPAN

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President's Message

Alison Watson

Happy New Year to you all and best wishes for this year in Education. We constantly face many challenges and these vary from NCLB renewal to how best to instruct our students. Much has been discussed and analyzed regarding the achievement gap. Recently I have been reading about the achievement gap as it applies to differing instructional strategies appropriate for boys and girls.

Schools in Colorado achieved significant academic gains in reading and writing by implementing boy-friendly instructional strategies in the elementary grades. Recognizing that most girls respond to teaching methods that include verbal directions and instruction, that they are able to sit still and focus, and that girls also tend to listen carefully, Colorado schools identified

specific strategies to respond to boy characteristics. According to a September 2006 article in Educational Leadership and to a letter in Education Next, Winter 2006, boys are

Two points in the articles stated very succinctly that teachers should talk less and use humor more

identified as impulsive, able to focus best on a single task, they are more spatial-kinesthetic, and more competitive. Elementary teachers who recognize these traits as natural to boys and thus quit nagging about them, develop a more teaching friendly rapport and thus enable and enhance boy learning more effectively.

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What I Know About Professional Learning Communities Brian Boyer

A few years back I received a publication in the mail compliments of ASCD – *Whatever It Takes*. This book, authored by the husband wife team of Rick and Becky DuFour, Robert Eaker, and Gayle Karhapek, details the process by which effective schools respond when their students don't learn. The book caught my attention and started me on a profession journey that, after more than three years, I realize has only just begun.

The schools identified in *Whatever It Takes* are organized around the Professional Learning Community

(PLC) model. This model, defined in another DuFour/Eaker publication is best described as:

Educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. Professional learning communities operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators. Learning by Doing (2006)

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What I Know About PLC's

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In the traditional public school setting individual teachers work in isolation to instruct, assess, and intervene. In this traditional model many teachers have become, as Rick DuFour describes it, a collection of independent contractors whose only commonality is the school parking lot.

The journey, up to this point, has been both rewarding and messy.

For me the PLC model provides a simple structure by which schools can **systematically** address our mandate of high levels of learning for all students. Schools that operate as PLC's approach the task of student learning in a different fashion. Teachers in a PLC school work in collaborative teams to answer four simple questions:

1. What do we want our students to learn?
2. How do we know that they learned it?
3. What do we do when students struggle?
4. How do we challenge those students who have gained mastery?

Through this collaboration teachers help each other to become better at their craft and in so doing achieve significant gains in student learning.

I work at a large comprehensive high school. The staff there has committed themselves to learning more about the PLC approach and implementing

those strategies that are a good fit for our students and our site. We are just beginning our second semester of weekly teacher collaboration and are making plans for next year to begin to address the problems posed by question number three. The journey, up to this point, has been both rewarding and messy.

The school district in which I work has been very supportive of our efforts and has contracted with outside experts to help us in the work we are doing. One of those experts, Austin Buffum, will be in town in April and will be addressing the PDK general membership. See "Looking Ahead" inside this issue for details.

Calendar of PDK Events

2007—2008

Mark your calendars early!

- ◆ Thursday February 28th Steve Klein
- ◆ Monday March 10th Board meeting
- ◆ Thursday April 3rd Austin Buffum
- ◆ Monday April 14th Board meeting
- ◆ Tuesday May 6th Celebrations

Hope to see you there!

Please consider volunteering to serve on the executive Board of your PDK Chapter. We are in need of a President-elect, and a membership committee member.

If you are interested in any of these positions, please contact Liz or Alison at lcapen@chicousd.org, or awatson@bcoe.org

Our next Presenter—Steve Klein

Steve Klein, Professional Development Coordinator from Butte County Office of Education, Center for Distributed Learning will be our presenter on Thursday, February 28th at The Market Café on 8th St. in Chico. We will meet as usual at 5:30 p.m., have dinner, a short business meeting, and then Steve will start his presentation at 6:45 p.m. We will conclude our meeting about 8 p.m. Please feel free to invite friends and colleagues to this special presentation.

Steve's topic is "Digital Students and Analog Teachers: Supporting Students In A New Landscape of Learning." How can teachers make technology work to improve learning?

The first part is recognizing students as "natives" in a digital world and the possibilities available to support their learning. The second part is seeing how technology fits into the current framework of the instructional process and your school's improvement plan. He will share findings from current research, discuss with us how school activities can be supported with the technology currently in student's lives, and share new ideas on how technology can move education forward.

Message from the President

Strategies used to help keep boys involved include using visual instructions and directions as well as verbal, letting boys have a voice in their writing topics and reading material, and making real-life connections to learning projects. Nothing sacred about these to boys, probably adding these to one's repertoire would help girls too. Allowing boys a choice in writing topics and reading material will help us move from girl centered topics to more non-fiction choices. Two points in the articles stated very succinctly that teachers should talk less and use humor more.

The E.D. article, With Boys in Mind/Teaching to

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the Minds of Boys, also includes the brain research, done by authors Kelley King and Michael Gurian, supporting these ideas. Researcher Michael Gurian gives further examples of how teachers can respond to both boy brains and girl brains in his article in the American School Board Journal (October 2006). In Education Next, the letter, "Under What Conditions Do Boys Learn More?", is written in response to a previous article on matching teacher and student gender.

Wishing you a positive and productive 2008!

Rita In Review

On October 24th PDK welcomed Rita Stanley to speak at the Holiday Inn to local educators. Rita Stanley, a certified trainer for Ruby Payne's book *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, provided insight into understanding generational poverty and how it leads to loss of other resources. Stanley stated that the *Framework* says there are eight resources that make a significant difference in a student's life, and only one has to do with money—financial resources.

The other seven resources are emotional, support systems, spiritual (not necessarily religious), mental, physical, relationships / role models, and knowledge of hidden rules. Children in poverty are usually missing several of these resources.

Gail Kemp

Referring to Payne's book, Ms. Stanley continued by suggesting strategies for educators to help support the eight resource needs of their students. One strategy is to teach students in poverty the hidden rules (the unspoken cues and habits) of the middle class, under which most of society operates. In addition, educators can develop relationships with their students by building trust and holding high expectations for all their students. Educators can also teach students in poverty to become emotionally strong, how to be critical thinkers, and be role models for them. Ms. Stanley concluded by recommending reading "Payne's School Model" and applying it in order to increase tests scores for all students.

Looking Ahead

At the General meeting on the evening of Thursday, April 3rd, 2008, PDK is honored to have a presentation given by Dr. Austin Buffum, who is an expert in Professional Learning Communities. Dr Buffum has been working with Chico Unified School District over the last year to help them develop teaching collegial groups that benefit student learning. Dr Buffum is the retired Senior Deputy Superintendent of the Capistrano Unified School District serving over 50,000 students in South Orange County. Dr. Buffum has been selected as "Curriculum and Instruction Administrator of the Year" by the Association of California School Administrators. He was invited by Dr. Rick DuFour to participate in the Professional Learning Communities at Work Leadership Academy during the 2005-2006 school year and has

Alison Watson

been invited to address schools, districts, and state departments of education throughout the country on professional learning communities.

Dr Buffum will provide an overview of Professional Learning Communities and help to develop a common understanding among participants. We are excited to have such a wonderful and renowned speaker join us to talk about this latest strategy in education.

Please invite your friends and colleagues to hear this presentation.

The time and place will be announced later. Flyers and/or email notices will be sent to you. Also watch our website for updates. Please mark your calendars for this special event.

Department of Professional Studies—Zip 460
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Upcoming Events:

Thursday , February 28

5:30-8 pm at the Market Café
1387 E 8th St. Chico
Dinner and Keynote Speaker:
cost \$17.00 for students, and
\$22.00 for non-students.

Steve Klein

Digital Students and Analog Teachers:
Supporting Students In A New Landscape of Learning

RSVP for the above event by Friday February 22nd to
lcapen@chicousd.org, awatson@bcoe.org, or leave a message at 877-0495

Check out our new web site at www.pdkchico.org to find a copy of our brochure.
Use the brochure to attract new members.