Rationale for the Integration of Reflective Practice and Professional Growth Planning

Self-reflection is a process by which teachers assess the effectiveness of their instructional planning, lesson implementation, content knowledge, beliefs, and dispositions for the purpose of self-improvement. When teachers use data to reflect on what worked, what did not work, and what types of changes they might make to be more successful, the likelihood of knowing how to improve increases dramatically. Evidence suggests that self-reflection is a critical component of the evaluation process. (Airason & Gullickson, 2006; Tucker, Stronge, & Gareis, 2002).

The goal of self-reflection is to improve teaching and learning through ongoing thinking on how professional practices impact student and teacher learning. The attainment of this goal is facilitated through the development of a professional growth plan that either develops or hones professional practices and leadership skills.

The goal of a professional growth plan is to facilitate the translation of growth needs identified through self-reflection and other processes into practical activities and experiences that are of value to teachers in strengthening their competencies in the identified growth need areas. An action plan developed as part of the professional growth planning process should include activities designed to support collaboration and learning among teachers. Research shows that in order for professional growth to be effective, it should be a deliberate process that occurs within the context of a teacher’s daily activities in the classroom/school environment and connects back to student learning (Marzano, 2003).

The Professional Growth Plan should address realistic, focused, and measurable professional goals. The plan should connect data from multiple sources including classroom observation feedback, data on student growth and achievement, and professional growth needs identified through self-assessment and reflection. As teachers collaborate with administrators to identify explicit goals, these goals should become the focus of professional growth activities, support, and on-going reflection related to the progress in meeting the goals and the impact that is measurable for both the teacher and students.

Reflective practices and professional growth planning are cyclical in design. The teacher (1) reflects on his current growth needs based on multiple sources of data and identifies an area or areas for focus; (2) collaborates with his administrator to develop a professional growth plan and action steps; (3) implements the plan; (4) regularly reflects on the progress and impact of the plan on his professional practice; (5) modifies the plan as appropriate; (6) continues implementation and ongoing reflection; (7) and, finally, conducts a summative reflection on the degree of goal attainment and the implications for next steps.

Self-reflection improves teaching practice through ongoing, careful consideration of the impact of teaching practice on student growth and achievement. The Professional Growth Plan is the vehicle through which the outcomes of self-reflection are organized, articulated as specific goals, contextualized in a support framework, and monitored through pre-determined methods. Together, the multiple measures of self-reflection and professional growth planning provide critical information in determining the overall effectiveness of the teacher.

Reflective Practice and PGP Cycle
Collaborate with Principal to develop PGP

Implement the PGP and Action Plan

Regularly reflect on PGP progress and Impact

Modify the PGP as appropriate

Continue to implement and reflect on PGP

Summative reflection of goal status and next steps

Reflect and identify growth goal