

Program Brief

External Evaluation of the OMS Professional Development Leaders Program

PRAIRIE Group

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I. OVERVIEW

An external evaluation of the CPS Office of Math and Science (OMS) “Professional Development Leaders” (PDL) program during 2007-08 is being undertaken by evaluators from the PRAIRIE Group, University of Illinois at Chicago. According to OMS lead staff and PDL program planners, as well as documents describing the PDL program, the key goals of the PDL Teacher Leadership program for this program year are:

- to develop a pool of “qualified” teacher leaders who can provide leadership in the Chicago Public Schools in mathematics and science and provide professional development for the designated instructional materials (from the Professional Development Leaders Draft and Overview, March 2007)
- to coordinate and standardize the recruitment, training, certification, role expectations, and ongoing supports for Math and Science PDLs.

The purpose of this program brief is not to offer an evaluation, but to serve as the basis for discussion with OMS lead staff and PDL program planners about:

- OMS’ vision of and expectations for the PDL program;
- program activities to date and plans for 2008;
- ongoing internal monitoring and assessment;
- uses of formative, external evaluation of the PDL program in ways that are most useful to the PDL planners as they move forward.

II: FEEDBACK

The feedback presented here is based on a review of interviews and meetings with OMS’s Acting Director of Mathematics and Science, Elementary Mathematics Manager, and four math and science facilitators who are involved in PDL program development, as well as the review of the available key documents describing the math and science PDL programs. Based on that review, and in light of the program’s broad goals, we have identified the following two areas of program activity as having primary importance to the PDL program planners for the 2007-08 program year:

1. *Program implementation*: in particular, efforts to coordinate and standardize the recruitment, training, and certification of Math and Science PDLs;
2. *Role development*: clarification and standardization of the PDL role as well as the training and support role of the OMS facilitator.

This program brief provides feedback to the OMS lead staff and PDL program planners about what we understand to be key facets of these two areas. After describing the long-term goals and objectives of each

¹ Authors produced this report collaboratively and share responsibility for its contents. The conclusions drawn in this report reflect the viewpoints of the authors. While there are many potential viewpoints, these reflect a systematic analysis of data by external evaluators. The hope is that these findings can facilitate improvement of this and related programs through open discussion and consideration of data-driven understandings. For further information, please contact Janise Hurtig at 312-413-3367 or jhurtig@uic.edu.

program area, we offer a summary of program activities pertaining to that area and describe the kind of monitoring and assessment that is being used, or could be used, to determine program successes and challenges. Finally, we address program outcomes: for instance, evidence of “quality” professional development provision or expansion of the pool of PDLs within math and science. At the end of each section we offer questions for reflection that are intended to frame dialogue about OMS’s vision for how the PDL program should develop in order to best accomplish its overarching aims.

Program Implementation

(A) RECRUITMENT

Long-term goals and objectives pertaining to recruitment

While the topic of specific recruitment goals did not arise in our conversations with OMS lead staff and program planners, it can be assumed that a key goal is effective, ongoing recruitment of a sufficient number of PDL trainees to meet the programmatic aim of developing a larger pool of high quality PDLs for both math and science. It is not clear whether the capacity-building needs of math and science are equivalent, both in terms of total number of PDLs, and the rate at which they should be recruited and trained.

Summary of program activities pertaining to the recruitment and screening of potential PDLs:

All OMS staff spoke of the need to develop a larger pool of PDLs to help lead the CMSI curricula professional development sessions. They indicated that potential PDLs have been recruited mostly by word of mouth. OMS facilitators have asked citywide specialists, school specialists, and area coaches to help identify potential candidates. Some OMS staff recruited from within their professional development classes. Based on interview, focus group data, and the “Teacher Leader Draft Plan,” it seems that potential PDLs are identified through any combination of the following processes: observation at experienced user workshops; visits to classrooms; observation at specialist workshops; recommendations from citywide specialists, specialists and coaches.

Once identified, a potential PDL is recruited and asked to think about becoming a PDL. The candidate is then invited to come to Medill to talk to OMS staff/other PDLs to find out about the position and the training that is required. At some point, a candidate may receive a formal written invitation (as per the Math documents provided) and be asked to fill out an application to the position of PDL. This raised a question for the evaluators as to whether these recruiting processes are consistently done for each and every potential candidate, across math and science.

How is recruitment monitored and assessed?

Currently there seems to be a rather loose monitoring of who is asked to become a PDL. Program documents from both Math and Science included a set of “qualifications” for potential PDLs that are formally communicated in the invitation letter as well as in some of the PDL Academy documents.

It seems that when potential PDLs are observed teaching using the CMSI curriculum, OMS staff utilize the Classroom Observation Guide (COG) (for math or science); however, we are not sure if this instrument captures the characteristics or behaviors that OMS could use to judge whether or not potential PDLs are “qualified” or not.

This process calls into question whether OMS staff keep track of who has recruited whom and based on what qualifications. Perhaps if these kinds of records were kept, OMS would have a better sense of what forms of informal/formal recruiting are happening and which ones produce the type of candidate sought. It seems to us that it might be important to document the following: Who (and how many) are approached to think about this new role? How are these individuals deemed “qualified” for this role? What percent of potential candidates (of the total number approached by OMS staff) take part in the program and become PDL’s? What percent certified

PDLs remain active in providing professional development? (Why do some not participate or participate and then stop?)

Program outcomes pertaining to recruitment

Beyond the broad goal of increasing the pool of qualified professional development leaders, PRAIRIE is not aware of specific target numbers that could be used to assess successful movement towards that goal. Our understanding is that currently each curriculum has approximately 20-30 PDLs providing professional development workshops at different grade levels. At this time, it is unclear how many PDLs are needed for each of the CMSI supported-curricula.

Reflection Questions

- Is standardization of the screening and recruitment process for PDLs across math and science appropriate and realistic, or do the two “sides” of OMS have differing capacity requirements that would suggest different recruitment processes?
- Is the demand for PDLs so great that it is difficult to find qualified and/or willing candidates? For instance, is it difficult to select potential PDLs who meet the explicit criteria listed in the PDL material?
- Is the quality of the PDL program compromised if not all candidates are qualified and/or willing?

(B) TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

Long-term goals and objectives for training and certification

A major goal of the PDL program is to deliver structured training that prepares PDLs to work with teachers as adult learners. Specifically, PDLs are supposed to be able to design and implement a professional development session in the instructional curriculum with which they have expertise.

A key program goal for this year is to develop coherence in the training of PDLs across Math and Science. This goal is based on the belief, shared by Math and Science lead staff and program planners, that the skills Math and Science PDLs need to be effective are comparable.

Summary of training and certification activities

The steps toward certification as PDL in Math and Science seem to include: substantial prior hours of professional development; 12 hours of participation in the spring Leadership Academy; preparation and co-teaching of a professional development during the summer following the Academy.

Currently, the leadership academies for Math and Science overlap in total number of hours, curricular content and delivery of content. However, they are not completely standardized. For instance, according to the two ‘blueprints,’ Math PDLs are expected to have almost twice the number of hours spent acquiring specific content knowledge than for Science. The same is true for the time spent developing professional development facilitation skills.

How are training and certification monitored and assessed?

We imagine that participation in training is monitored currently via attendance records at the Leadership Academy and other training sessions. We are unclear on how OMS staff monitor the quality, effectiveness, or success of these training sessions. Also we do not know how OMS staff assess the impact of the Academy on

PDL recruits, both in terms of their acquisition of new content knowledge and leadership skills, and their understanding of the PDL role (see “Program outcomes” below, and Section 2 on “Role Development”).

Program outcomes pertaining to training and certification

The principal outcomes of the PDL Academy delineated in PDL program planning documents entail acquisition or deepening of knowledge and skills by participants, in the areas of subject matter content and pedagogy, instructional programs’ structure and philosophy, presentation skills, and understanding of the components of effective professional development provision. Based on a review of PDL Academy documents, the evaluators are not sure whether the existing reflection forms provide the information needed to assess these outcomes.

A primary outcome of the PDL program is the certification of highly qualified PDLs who then regularly engage in providing professional development. We do not have data on how many PDL’s have been certified to date and how many of these are actively engaged in providing professional development. An emerging outcome voiced by OMS staff is the desire for greater standardization for the training of PDLs in math and science

OMS lead staff and program planners expressed concern about the attrition of some trained PDLs. This suggests that there is an implicit goal of retention of PDLs as professional development leaders. However, it is not clear how for how long PDLs are expected to continue to provide professional development workshops once they have been certified.

Reflection Questions

- Are the program’s assumptions about the kind of training experienced teachers need to become effective PDLs being born out in the results of the trainings?
- What are the pros and cons of further standardization? Are there ways in which the math and science PDL training programs currently differ? Should any of these differences be left in place?
- What does the certification of a Professional Development Leader mean to the school who houses one? Does that meaning correspond with one or more of the goals of the PDL program?
- Once the PDL has received his or her certification, do they continue to receive support in that role?
- Trained and certified PDLs can increase the delivery of the necessary professional development to fellow teachers and free up facilitators’ time. In terms of the goal of internal capacity building, what kind of demand is there for the services that PDLs provide, whether at the school, area, and district levels? How large is the imagined scale of the program?

(C) ROLE DEVELOPMENT

Long-term goals and objectives pertaining to role development

According to the Professional Development Leaders Draft Plan, a major goal is developing teacher leaders “who can provide leadership in the Chicago Public Schools in mathematics and science and provide professional development for the designated instructional materials.” (March 2007; emphasis added). Along with this is the process of institutionalizing the position of the PDL as an “operational arm of OMS” (from CMSI: *Goals of the PDL Academy*, pg. 2, 2007), and standardizing the role of the PDL across math and science (from interviews and meetings with OMS lead staff and PDL program planners)

Summary of program activities pertaining to role development

Developing teacher leaders: As we reviewed earlier in this report, the emphasis to date in program design and activities is to prepare and support PDLs who provide professional development in specific CMSI-supported

instructional materials. The primary emphasis of this training and support is on increasing their content knowledge and understanding of the curricular materials, with additional emphasis on the skills needed to “teach adult learners” and give effective presentations. In other words, the PDL training process seems to contribute significantly to the first facet of the role of the PDL.

By comparison, those facets of the training that focus on leadership development are less well defined. For example, is there is time for the PDLs-in-training to discuss the nature of their roles as leaders in their schools and in their areas? It is also not clear whether there are currently any PDL program activities that actively support PDLs’ building a leadership role in their schools or area. Both blueprints indicate limited formal activities inside schools in a leadership and facilitative role (i.e., lead grade-level discussions of student work, a specific lesson).

Institutionalizing the position of PDL: The primary ways OMS is institutionalizing the PDL position are: offering the PDL Academy; certifying PDLs; and providing continuing education credits to participants who have completed the training.

Another way the role of PDL is currently being institutionalized is through the dissemination of written information about the qualifications requirement to become a PDL, the structure of the Academy, and the scope and purpose of the PDL. While both Math and Science PDL planners reported word-of-mouth and personal invitations as primary means of recruitment, letters of introduction, formal invitations and the circulation of other materials about the PDL Academy that list the specific qualifications and requirements of the PDL role contribute to its institutionalization.

Currently, there are numerous examples of Math and Science teacher leadership roles within CPS. Role-related issues that were not raised in discussions with OMS lead staff and program planners, or in PDL Program documents, included how the PDL role is distinct from these other roles, if and how it competes with other teacher leadership roles in schools and areas, and if and how it is expected that PDLs collaborate with other math and science teacher leaders in their schools and areas. These are issues we hope to explore further with OMS lead staff and program planners.

Standardizing the role of the PDL across Math and Science. The standardization of the PDL role is a primary goal for the PDL program. As previously mentioned, both Math and Science have formalized a “Blueprint to Become Professional Development Leaders.” Comparing these blueprints, the two plans are largely similar in terms of the learning goals for PDLs and expected tasks/activities. For instance, both plans place greatest emphasis on content knowledge of specific modules, units, and grade levels. The two plans also share the same goals for PDLs of becoming proficient in providing high quality professional development. One difference we noticed was that only the Math blueprint specifically identified the goal of demonstrating “standards-based teaching practices.” Currently, the time requirements for Math “professional presenters” is 102 hours, compared to 48 hours for Science “professional presenters.”

Some Math and Science program planners raised questions about the continuity of the training and whether, once a PDL teacher is certified, the additional time spent observing him or her constitutes a portion of the PDL’s ongoing training. Additionally, facilitators identified the ongoing need to standardize the PDL training, and expectations for the PDL role as PD providers but also inside their schools and the PDLs’ area.

How are role development activities monitored and assessed?

The primary way in which the PDL role is developed is through participation in the PDL Academy, certification, and co-teaching of a professional development session. The documents shared with the evaluators include participant reflection forms and the Science Classroom Observation Guide (COG). We did not find assessment tools specifically designed to provide relevant information about how PDLs’ roles are developed and refined over the course of their training, and how they come to define their own roles. This may be an area to explore further.

OMS staff identified the ongoing need to clarify the “road map” towards certification and the use of this role within the Office. It will be important moving forward to incorporate internal documentation, monitoring, and assessment tools and processes that contribute to tracking the development and implementation of this “road map.”

Program outcomes pertaining to role development

The explicit focus of the PDL program is on the development of the PDL role. Currently, that outcome is specified in PDL program documentation in terms of the criteria that have been met by a certified PDL (see for instance the Math and Science “Blueprints” and Professional Development Leader Draft Plan). In addition to those desired outcomes, OMS lead staff and PDL Program Planners might want to consider what the desired outcomes are for retention of PDLs in that role once they have been certified.

The evaluators also noted that the PDL program has an impact on the key role of *facilitator*. Although program documents do not specifically address the role of the Math or Science facilitators who recruit potential PDLs and who oversee the PDL trainees as they move through the steps toward becoming an effective PDL, one outcome of the PDL program is that it targeted the need for math and science facilitators and those roles have changed and evolved in the process of overseeing the PDL program.

The role of the facilitators previously was to work with school specialists, using the COG, to support teachers’ classroom instruction. The facilitators now also have a role in PDL development. They are charged with overseeing the PDL Leadership Academy, monitoring and assessment of PDLs during the PD provision, making adjustments with the PDLs to their PD plans and delivery, reporting to the Math and Science lead staff, and in essence building capacity.

This implicit outcome of the PDL program raises issues pertaining to role definition and effective human resources within the OMS. For example, some PDL planners commented that the responsibility for facilitating PD limits how effective they can be in a monitoring and assessment role of their PDLs. As another example, if facilitators are now focused on PD provision and training PDLs to provide professional development, there is the question of whether they also continue to work as facilitators in the schools, or whether this task is now evolves/devolves into a part of the role of the PDLs.

Reflection Questions

- What are the expectations of PDLs in terms of their contribution to the functioning of their school? What are perceived advantages or disadvantages to having a PDL in a school, from the perspective of school administration and faculty? Is there a shared understanding of the role of the PDL within and across schools?
- How is the PDL role similar to and distinct from the roles of other Math and Science teacher leaders? What are the expectations of PDLs in terms of collaboration with other Math and Science teacher leaders in their school and area?
- How is the work of the PDL facilitators distributed and apportioned in order to produce the desired results? Are there sufficient math and science facilitators to support effective PDL role development?