Weekly Professional Conversation Guidelines

Make Weekly Professional Conversations Part of School Life

Our school started a weekly support group three years ago. The purpose was to create an atmosphere where we could read professionally and share our thoughts on the selected books or articles. With our principal’s encouragement it has become an integral part of our school’s environment. In addition to the professional development opportunities, it has opened our lines of communication across all grade levels.

How to Start a Group and Keep It Going:

- One staff person needs to be in charge: facilitate set schedule, schedule meeting place.
- Another person takes notes and types up weekly minutes. (It is difficult to be the facilitator and secretary.)
- Publicize first meeting, date, place, and time.
- Personally invite staff members to attend, if possible.
- Bring possible books or reading selections for the group to review as possible reading materials to the first meeting.
- Don’t worry about food for meetings except for an occasional special event.
- Principal helps set up meetings, but does not actively participate until fourth or fifth meeting; principal participates as equal.
- Investigate grants, district professional development funds, etc. to purchase books for group.
- If there is no money for books, discuss an article from *The Reading Teacher* or another professional journal for use at the meeting.
- Investigate the possibility of offering graduate credit or professional development contact hours to members.
- It is important to meet weekly; only cancel for really important reasons.
- Don’t forget to invite the speech pathologist, guidance counselor, educational assistants, music and physical education teachers, and other support staff.
- Start and end on time!
- Don’t worry if you experience an occasional “slump” in attendance. That will happen and it may depend on what’s going on such as grade cards or even the material selected at that time. Attendance will pick back up.

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