



Curriculum: A Catalyst for Change (Part Two)

*This is the second segment of **Curriculum: A Catalyst for Change** co-written by Sara McGinnis and Kyla Slate. Sara is the curriculum director at Sheridan County School District #1 (SCSD#1) in Wyoming. Kyla is a former consultant with the Curriculum Leadership Institute (CLI) who worked with SCSD#1 over a 4-year timeframe to implement the CLI Model, a comprehensive, systemic school improvement model. Other contributors are noted within each part. Part 1 focused on intentional change at the district level and is available [HERE](#).*

Principals as Instructional Leaders

Since all district leaders were involved in creating the new vision for the district, they all needed a thorough understanding of the curriculum process and how to implement change. A number of the district leaders were selected to lead subject area committees through their curriculum and assessment work; thereby ensuring a common language and a common way of completing the work. Although facilitators can help districts, there is always much to be done between those visits. Building principals and curriculum staff were needed to provide the necessary on-the-spot feedback and support to keep the process moving forward.

Deb Hofmeier, Principal of Tongue River Elementary at SCSD #1: *“Having been involved with curriculum development for many years as a classroom teacher, it wasn't until I was involved with the CLI process as an administrator that I finally was able to put all of the pieces together. We had made many attempts at finding a working curriculum and each time it ended up on a shelf collecting dust as teachers continued to teach their favorite*

units. Going through the process from the beginning, to implementation and then evaluation of our work has helped to ensure that all of the students in our school district are getting a high quality education. Working side by side with the teachers who are in the trenches allows administrators to better understand the process. To say in the least, it was not an easy process; but, the final products and the assurance that all of our students will have the opportunity to learn was well worth the effort.”

Tiffany Kohl, Curriculum Director, BBCHS#307 (Bradley, IL): *“Our district struggled with moving forward and making hard decisions. As a suburban high school district, we had different “schools” operating under one roof. Each department was at its own place in the area of curriculum. Some had been writing and rewriting over and over, some hadn't started, and some were just neglected. We did not have a common vernacular for how we DID curriculum revision in the building. Now we have a system and a process that is clear for curriculum and assessment that supports PLCs and aligns with our district's goals involving Charlotte Danielson's framework.”*

A struggle for any district undergoing systemic change is finding time. The long range plans made in the beginning relate to change in a broad respect such as, “the math committee will create common summative assessments this school year.” At the building level, administrators were asked to consider time in terms of daily schedules and consider adjustments that would help meet completion goals. Releasing teachers to work collaboratively and attend training was a time consideration for all principals, especially when substitutes would be in their buildings. Sometimes it took a little “thinking outside the box” to accommodate the required time commitment for implementing a new system.

Sara (SCSD #1): *“I don’t think any of us anticipated the amount of time it would take to complete the process for each subject area committee. We are on a 4-day school week and teachers work one Friday a month. Traditionally, Friday work sessions involved*

building or committee meetings. Instead of all day meetings, we adjusted the Friday schedule to give teachers more time to work with their grade level colleagues to complete curriculum tasks. Teachers also used FaceTime and Google to collaborate on shared documents.”

In terms of time, principals examined the workload for teachers and removed requirements that no longer aligned to the new district vision. Often in schools, tasks are added without the provision of additional time and support to accomplish them. An analysis of new and old processes helped administrators discover those that no longer align with the direction the district is headed.

Next – Part Three: **“Teachers in Charge”**

Look for the important ways in which teachers are uniquely qualified to collaborate with the curriculum development process, and best practices for encouraging participation.