

ENGAGING CONNECTIONS

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Ridgewood Public Schools



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Connecting Teaching & Learning

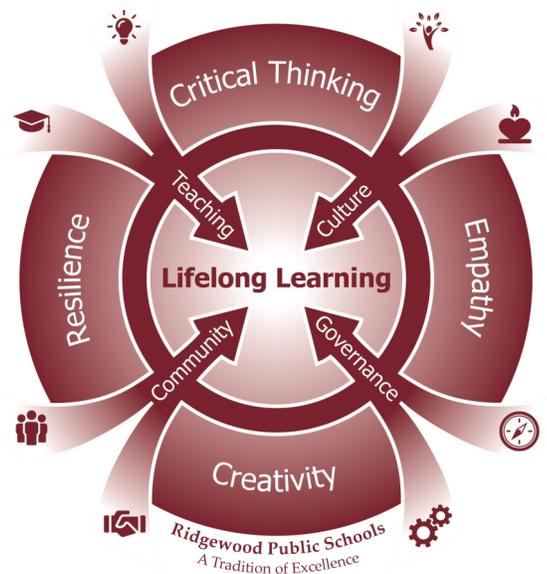
Stacie Poelstra

As a new building was being readied for dedication at Newark State College (currently Kean University) in 1912, John Dana White, the college librarian, was charged with finding an appropriate Latin quote to serve as an inscription on the building. Not finding a suitable quote, he penned one himself.

"Those who teach must never cease to learn."

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Engaging Connections*, our new professional development newsletter that will highlight workshops and learning opportunities in the district and inform you about external seminars that can deepen your content knowledge and advance innovative pedagogy that is aligned with district goals. The origin of this newsletter is rooted in feedback from the first phases of the strategic planning process, as the district committee emphasized the importance of ongoing learning for teachers as integral to the success of our students and the district. The intentional placement of lifelong learning at the center of Vision 2024 grounds all of us in a commitment to continuous growth that will enhance our capabilities and enrich the student experience.

In each installment of this newsletter, we will share a professional development experience that reflects our goals in teaching. Also featured will be upcoming professional development opportunities that align with our district goals. It is our hope that you will be inspired by your colleagues and use the recommendations that are presented to select areas where you would like to extend your own knowledge and advance your innovative practice.



I hope you enjoy our first issue, and I wish you all the best for a great year of professional learning.

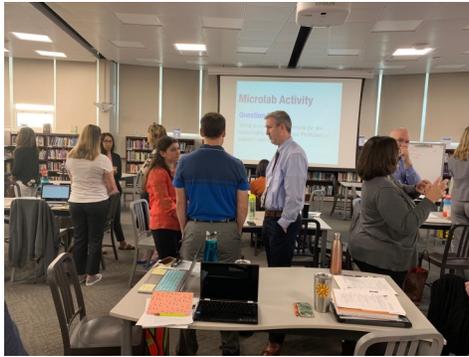
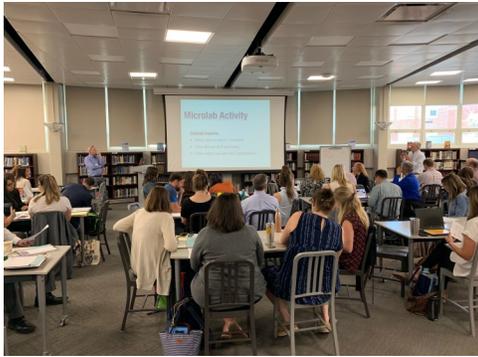
A Path to the Future

This year, a district cohort of K-12 teachers and administrators is working with the [Great Schools Partnership](#) (GSP), an organization located in New England that is committed to advancing educational improvement and enhancing learning experiences for all students. GSP has been at the forefront of school reform in several states, leading the way on proficiency-based assessment, equity, and the creation of frameworks to ensure that students are well-equipped to meet the challenges of the future.

The goals of GSP support the values and dispositions identified by the Ridgewood Public Schools Strategic Planning Committee, which recognized the importance of prioritizing the knowledge and skills that enrich the student experience while contributing to a strong foundation for lifelong learning. During our first two-day seminar, Dan Liebert and Craig Kesselheim of GSP guided discussions and

activities to explore proficiency-based learning, flexible learning pathways, and learner-centered accountability. Teachers and administrators were challenged to reflect on their own practice and consider how they can leverage these concepts to advance their pedagogy and assessment practices.

Another exciting element of this professional development initiative is our partnership with the Emerson school district. It has been tremendously beneficial to learn from others across grade levels, subject areas, and districts, as well as to gain alternative perspectives, share ideas, and gather feedback. We are looking forward to our ongoing work with GSP and Emerson, as our cohort will engage in site visits and additional seminars with Dan and Craig over the course of the school year.



Why We Teach

*"One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world."
Malala Yousafzai*

*"Education is improving the lives of others and for leaving your community better than you found it."
Marian Wright Edelman*

We would love to share your "Why We Teach" stories. Please email them to clabenda@ridgewood.k12.nj.us.



Growing Our Practice: PD Highlights

- ◆ [The Community Outreach Program Wellbeing Speaker Series](#) featured a screening of the IndieFlix documentary *Angst* as this year's opening event. Dan Kilday, Supervisor of Wellness, was instrumental in bringing this timely program to the community after making a connection with Dawn Cetrulo, Health Officer/Director for the Village of Ridgewood, to collaborate on promoting wellness in the community. Stemming from this initial outreach, a joint venture between Ridgewood Public Schools, the Village of Ridgewood Health Department, and West Bergen Mental Healthcare was formed to co-sponsor the film screening for grade 9 students during the day and parents and community members that same evening. To expand the conversation about anxiety and coping strategies, the high school staff viewed the film on the September 27th enrichment morning. We would like to recognize and thank the RPS evening panelists, Lauren DePinto, Kevin Feeley, Sarah Gregor, and Dr. Wayne Yankus, as well as Jeanne Marron of West Bergen Mental Healthcare, for their expertise and thoughtful contribution. We are exploring the possibility of offering additional screenings for staff throughout the district, as we continue to address this ongoing issue and explore ways to build our students' capacity for resilience.
- ◆ In alignment with District Goal #3 (to build capacity to foster student well-being), eight staff members have registered for a workshop on "Anxiety in the Classroom" in November. We look forward to learning more about the knowledge they will gain and share, further advancing this discussion and best practices in helping our students manage anxiety.
- ◆ The upcoming Professional Development Day will consist of a half-day of building-based activities and presentations, with the afternoon being dedicated time for staff members to work on completing Safe Schools modules.
- ◆ Staff Developer Christie DeAraujo has implemented a monthly email blast on Word Study for elementary teachers to keep them informed about changes and progress, while engaging them in the process of expanding our Word Study program.
- ◆ In-service Program registration is still open! Special thanks to our Technology Innovation Specialists and the teachers who submitted course proposals and developed creative and thought-provoking courses aligned to a district goal. Many of you have already registered to take advantage of this professional development opportunity led by your colleagues. For those who have not already done so, [click here](#) to take a look at the variety of offerings.

Learn, Grow, Teach

A Quick Look at Professional Development Opportunities Aligned to District Goals

District Goal 1: Build capacity for advancing student-centered learning	District Goal 2: Build capacity for advancing differentiation practices	District Goal 3: Build capacity to foster student well-being
<p>TMI Education Workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Writing Our Way to Rich Teaching: Practices that Support Authentic Writing Instruction, Grades 4-8 ◆ January 16, 2020 ◆ No Cost-PLC Member <p>TMI Education Workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ ...But What if We Didn't?: Challenging Assumptions about Literacy and Creating Opportunities for Authentic Learning, Grades 6-12 ◆ February 3, 2020 ◆ No Cost-PLC Member 	<p>TMI Education Workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Getting Started with Math Workshop - Small Group Instruction, Grades K-8 ◆ November 15, 2019 ◆ No Cost-PLC Member <p>BER—Bureau of Education & Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Developing Students' Initiative, Ownership and Follow-Through to Create Responsible, Independent and Successful Learners, Grades 3-12 ◆ December 16, 2019 (Newark, NJ) ◆ December 17, 2019 (White Plains, NY) ◆ \$279 	<p>TMI Education Workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The School Avoidant Child: A Collaborative Approach to Fostering Change ◆ November 15, 2019 ◆ No Cost-PLC Member <p>TMI Education Workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ SEL Through Mindful Practices ◆ December 9, 2019 ◆ No Cost-PLC Member