

# Advance in Practice: Supporting teacher growth and collaboration using Lesson Study at PS 108

## About PS 108

- Grades served: Pre-K-5
- Student Enrollment: 881
- Teachers on staff: 66

At PS 108 in Brooklyn, Principal Constance Hahn and her faculty work hard to build a community that focuses on providing opportunities and support for both students' and teachers' learning. Providing teachers and administrators with information and tools to support teacher development and student growth is a key feature of *Advance*. Many schools, including PS 108, look for opportunities to enhance existing support for teachers using information learned through *Advance*.

Principal Hahn explains, "Our philosophy is that *everyone* is a lifelong learner. Even when we are at our best, we always want to strengthen our practice. There is always new research and methodology and we need to stay up on it." During the 2012-13 school year, PS 108 integrated lesson study into their professional development plan to provide teachers with additional opportunities to collaborate and strengthen their practices.

Lesson study provides the opportunity for a group of teachers to deeply examine their practice by jointly planning a single lesson around a selected instructional strategy. As part of the process, a team member teaches the lesson while colleagues observe. The team then reflects on and refines the lesson together, before repeating the cycle using the refined lesson plan with a new set of students. After discussing how effectively the lesson supported each teacher's students, the team examines how they can incorporate the strategy into daily practices to maximize student learning.

Kindergarten teacher Cheryl Ochoa says, "[The strategy learned] is not for one-time use, we can continuously use it if it worked with our students. We have another way of helping our students, and we can use the strategy with other content areas as well."

Below, Principal Hahn and her team share how they integrate lesson study into professional development.

*"Everything is about professional development - How do we help our students and our teachers grow?"*

- Constance Hahn, Principal PS 108

## Build a professional development plan that draws on *Advance* observation and assessment data

At PS 108, the lesson study protocol is built into existing teacher teams. When initially establishing the teams, Principal Hahn worked with Assistant Principal Gilda Galassi and her three staff developers to organize the teachers into both grade-based and content-based teams.

Staff developer Jennifer Persaud shares, "We organize [our professional development plan] around what we are seeing using our observation and assessment data. The teachers can self-identify areas they want to explore, but the groupings are based on the examination of teacher and school-wide data."

## Examine student data and research to identify instructional strategies for lasting impact on student learning

Once the lesson study team is established, they examine trends in student data to identify what skills or concepts to target, and research new instructional strategies that may promote student growth in those areas. The team selects one instructional



Principal Constance Hahn and her team reflect on their lesson studies at PS 108.

**Top row:** Angelica Espinal-Hutton, Brittany Robinson, Lisette Geraci, Constance Hahn, Lourdes Castillo, Melissa Vega, Gilda Galassi, Shayra Matos, Anne Slack, Jennifer Persaud, Mary Scarpa

**Bottom row:** Kathleen Bergin, Cheryl Ochoa, Ariel Toder, Tania Asqui

strategy to examine deeply through the shared lesson. The lesson study provides the teachers the space to practice using the strategy and determine how effective it is in meeting their students' needs. Principal Hahn says, "Everything goes back to the original pieces of data. In the planning process for the lesson, the teachers analyze the data in detail - How do we support the individual students in the class? The lesson is planned to address all of the students."

Second grade special education teacher Brittany Robinson adds, "The whole point of the lesson study is that it's supposed to be something that will reach all students regardless of their classification."

### **Establish a protocol for planning, observation, and reflection during the lesson study**

"We follow a protocol: We meet to plan and then we each observe two classes teaching the lesson we planned together. We watch the first class, we take notes and then we meet to revise the lesson based on what we observed. The teacher who taught the lesson speaks first and then each team member takes a turn to talk about what went well. We go around a second time to talk about how the lesson can be improved. Based on that, we come to consensus about what needs to be changed, revise the lesson, and watch the lesson taught in another class," Shayra Matos, second grade teacher explains.

The team uses a timer to help them use meeting time efficiently. During observations and reflections, the team also uses a template that includes the lesson and language from the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to keep the conversation focused on the lesson. During debrief conversations, participants will frequently refer to the effectiveness of the "lesson we planned" and not the way a single teacher executed it. The team has collective ownership for the work done.

### **Identify and arrange for the necessary resources and support**

"It generally takes two to three weeks [to complete a full cycle]. We spend a lot of time planning the lesson, and then each teacher teaches it one after the other because the lesson is tied to the calendar and curriculum map," explains staff developer Lisette Geraci.

The teachers at PS 108 use existing professional development and common planning time to meet. Principal Hahn also temporarily provided participating teachers with additional preparation periods and coverage of classes to provide them the opportunity to meet during the lesson study. Second grade teacher Anne Slack acknowledges, "It was extremely important for us to be given some additional time in the schedule to plan and implement this [lesson study], and we had a staff developer helping us coordinate."

### **Create the expectation of shared responsibility and collaboration**

*"I really love [participating in] lesson studies, because I feel like the teachers here, we're a family; it's not about you, it's about what is best for the kids, what's best for the practice. When I am watching a lesson, I become like an aunt, Ms. Ochoa's students are my students too. I look at what they do and I help out, because we all help each other."*

- Ariel Toder, Kindergarten Teacher

Ms. Slack explained that the participating teachers are accountable to one another for the success of the lesson study, "This is definitely a collaborative process. It's not going to work if there's just one teacher saying let's do this. Everyone has to contribute, everyone has to have an opinion and have input into the lesson."

Collaborating during the lesson study can also reinforce existing relationships and build a collaborative culture beyond the team. "If you walk around during our lunchtime or wander around during Professional Development you will find a teacher team," shares second grade teacher Melissa Vega.

### **Use what is learned and share it with colleagues**

Kindergarten teacher Kathleen Bergin reflects on the benefits of the lesson study process, "This is a study you are doing together to better yourself in your practice and to work together as a team. The beauty of it is, you can go to another teacher and say, 'I have a student, I'm not sure how to support him,' and then bounce ideas off of each other. That's the most important part of it – learning from one-another."

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