

Northeastern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program Chronicle

Churchill | Elko | Eureka | Humboldt | Lander | Pershing | White Pine | Great Basin College

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Bright Ideas to Illuminate Learning

The NRPDP hosted a two-day workshop entitled Bright Ideas to Illuminate Learning, prior to the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year. A variety of sessions were offered to meet the needs of teachers K-12, from six Nevada counties. Teachers participated in classes such as

Reader's Notebook, Differentiation in Math, Assessment, Motivating Boys, the Power of Positive Thought, Classroom Management, Writing to Learn, Improving Learning for Poverty Students and a Geometry Walk. At the end of the two days, we heard comments such as "I can't

wait to get into the classroom and try them out" referring to the engagement strategies presented.



Geometry Walk participants from Humboldt County.



Sharing a lesson plan.

"I am reminded of the comment 'Teach the writer, not the writing.'"

Developing Units of Writing

NRPDP regional coordinators Jerre Lamb, Holly Marich, Sharon McLean, and Cathy Smales presented a two-day class for K-12 Lander County teachers August 17th and 18th. "Developing Units of Writing" was provided as professional development support for the Lander County Writing Initiative that

began in the 2007-08 school year. The eleven class participants developed units of writing that focused on standards-based goals, student writing conferences, and formative and summative writing assessments. Teachers expressed an appreciation for the valuable information and the collaborative planning time.



Lander County teachers participating in the "Developing Units of Writing" class.

Engaging Elementary Mathematics



Humboldt educators exploring math games for student engagement.

"I will be using the samples collected when teaching my classes, as well as the ideas and activities."



Larry Renteria, NNSP participant, takes notes during one of the field days.

Engaging Elementary Mathematics, is an elementary math class providing higher level engagement for all. The primary focus of this class is to provide a reason, or relevance, for learning math skills through the strategies of math games and children's literature. This class provides opportunities for teachers to develop their own skills through exposure to appropriate math games. When students are playing a math game they are practicing and improving math skills as well as thinking strategically in order to win. This automatically provides an opportunity for differentia-

tion of learning as each student works to his/her ability level, and motivates students to do their best. Literature can be used to provide a common context for problem solving. During this class, teachers will recognize opportunities in children's literature to create a common context and "discover math in real situations." Teachers will practice strategies in higher level questioning techniques to help students develop independent thinking abilities. Providing learning activities which create relevance for students is one of the strongest teaching strategies teachers can use in their classroom. "In fact, rele-

vance is a crucial factor in all kinds of learning including language learning. Relevance is what motivates students to learn, and without motivation, there is little or no meaningful learning." (Mark Feder, 2009) Engaging Elementary Mathematics will be offered again several times this school year in different locations in the NNRPDP area. Look for opportunities to join other educators in providing meaningful and engaging mathematics activities in your classroom.

Keep this thought in mind:

"Skill to do comes of doing."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

NORTHEASTERN NEVADA SCIENCE PROJECT

The 2009 Northeastern Nevada Science Project Summer Institute, which focused on earth science, was held the week of August 3-7. This is the second year of the 3-year project directed by NNRPDP Regional Coordinators, Sharon McLean and Teresa Noland. Twenty-three teachers from across the region experienced hands-on geology through various field trips throughout

the area, river studies, and a tour of Barrick's Bald Mountain Mine. This intensive field study will be followed by six follow-up sessions throughout the school year. These teachers will earn six UNR graduate credits which can apply toward a license endorsement by the Nevada Department of Education in teaching earth science. Registration for the third and final year of the project, Inquiry in Physical Science, will take place in the spring of 2010.



NNSP 2009 Summer Institute participants.

Teacher Inquiry, What's it all About?

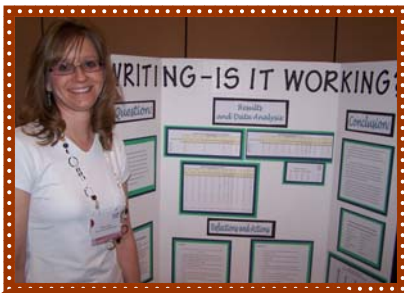
“Teacher Inquiry, also referred to as teacher research or action research, is defined as a systematic, intentional study by teachers of their own classroom practice” (Cochran – Smith and Lytle, 1993). Holly Marich, NNRPDP Regional Coordinator, has been facilitating Teacher Inquiry Communities, better known as TIC groups, for the last three years. She considers teacher inquiry the process of taking an honest look at one’s

chosen question and taking action according to the conclusions found. As participants of TIC, educators work collaboratively to provide probing questions and other intellectual insights for one another, aiding each teacher-researcher’s growth into new understandings toward their existing educational values, beliefs, and choices.

TIC has proven to be a viable and valuable form of professional development having great potential to support teachers as life-long learners willing to embrace disequilibrium and change for the sake of increased knowledge and best practice acquisition. Through the act of reflecting on one’s practice while engaged in the teacher inquiry process, teacher-researchers gain fluency in communicating with others regarding student needs and how best to meet those needs. Teacher-researchers have reported an increase in their confidence of recognizing and valuing their own knowledge, as they intuitively question their practice

without prejudice or blame for the sole purpose of greater understandings. The use of data to guide instruction becomes increasingly instinctive. An increase in collaboration and academic discussion becomes a part of the teacher-researcher’s natural disposition.

A special focus SMART TIC group has been initiated this year by NNRPDP Regional Coordinators Valerie Byrnes and Holly Marich. SMART TIC will take a closer look at the work teachers are doing with the implementation of SMART boards into their teaching practices. This is an exciting new endeavor that will begin September 28, 2009. Nine educators will embark on an exploratory journey with SMART Technology and Elko County students. A SMART Data Fair is scheduled in May of 2010 to share the findings.



Wendy Wilson, 5th grade teacher at Sage Elementary in Spring Creek, sharing her TIE findings about writing.

values, beliefs, and choices as an educator through the cycle of pondering burning questions, collecting and analyzing data appropriately matched to the

Lisa Freeman, a White Pine educator, explaining her research.



Understanding Poverty

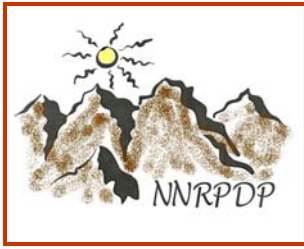
After an August workshop on poverty, David Grube, an Adobe Middle School teacher, said, “Finally, we have in Ruby Payne. . . a common sense and truly humane approach to the whole issue. . . . Her work is imperative for those who would sincerely ‘declare war on poverty.’”

At a time when poverty is continuing to increase across our country, it is critical that educators appreciate their role in the lives of our low socioeconomic students. The Northeastern Nevada Regional Development Program regional coordinators, Robin Johns, Cathy Smales, and Holly Marich have developed a series of workshops based

on the work of Dr. Ruby Payne, a leading authority on the effects of poverty. These workshops focus on how educators can better understand and support people from all economic backgrounds, and how the information can be connected to the classroom.

Some of the workshops include an “Introduction to the Framework for Understanding Poverty,” “Meeting Standards and Raising Test Scores,” “Creating and Building Relationships,” and “Teaching Appropriate Behaviors.”

There are schools in Elko, Eureka, Humboldt and White Pine counties are participating in the poverty study.



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Who are we?

The Northeastern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program (NNRPDP), established and funded by the Nevada State Legislature, is committed to providing quality professional development to teachers in the school districts of Churchill, Elko, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander, Pershing and White Pine counties.



Our Mission Statement

To enhance student learning within the context of Nevada State Professional Development Standards by recognizing and supporting research based effective instruction and by maintaining a collaborative learning culture and facilitating instructional leadership.

2009-2010 NNRPDP Staff

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