Inquiry Based Professional Development

Reference:

This type of professional development is focused on science teachers and the unique needs of science teachers. Based on national and state standards science teachers are required to implement the inquiry of science in their classrooms. This has become a challenge for science teachers because most were not taught as students in inquiry based classrooms. Implementing a standard that you are unfamiliar and uncomfortable with is very difficult. This model of professional development allows teachers to learn how to implement inquiry based learning through involvement in a workshop that is inquiry based. Teachers are first asked to identify the concepts that students have difficulty comprehending, and then create a 7-step plan for how to teach these concepts using inquiry. During this week of contemplating their 7-step plan the teachers participated in several inquiry based scientific activities. Then during the second week they presented their plans.

As a science teacher I often struggle with teaching inquiry. During my undergrad classes my science methods class did focus on inquiry based learning, however, it is difficult to come up with my own ideas. I would enjoy a two week workshop where I was given several examples of inquiry based instruction. I liked that they are instructing teachers how to use inquiry through inquiry based instruction. I like that the teachers were asked to come up with their own problems and find a solution, just like we ask our students to do. I think this model of professional development would be very beneficial to all science teachers.

Hands-off Professional Development (Self Directed, Exploration Approach)

Reference:

This model of professional development gave teachers the freedom to choose what they would like to explore and then gave them the time to do it. This particular article focused in on the use of technology in the classroom, but I think it could easily be adapted to focus on another aspect of professional development. Teachers were asked to decide a goal and use a tech tool in order to achieve their goal. They were then given six hours to explore the technology of their choosing. At the end of the six hours they were to report out on the successes and failures of what they had tried. There was technology support available through staff that was comfortable with the use of technology.

I like this model. I think all teachers would like to have some extra time to explore new concepts that are available in education. I liked that the model did have parameters and that there was an expectation of a presentation at the end of the time. Without parameters of what was to be accomplished during that time staff members would be likely to use the time to accomplish a daily task without any goal for achieving something new. I can see where this could be beneficial to most professionals. I can also see where it couldn’t always be your model for professional development. At times it is necessary to have specific goals and instruction.
Online Communities

Reference:

This model for professional development incorporated the use of online communities available for teachers. Teachers would choose to participate in online discussions with other teachers and experts outside their schools. As the teachers would discuss ideas they could then choose whether or not to implement the ideas shared in their own classrooms. This model is attractive for teachers who are comfortable with online forums and like the flexibility of participating at a time that is convenient for them.

I think this model is useful, and administration should encourage staff participation in online communities. In order for this type of professional development to be successful I think administration would need to support it with technical support, good online community resources, and an expectation of feedback from the teacher about what they have learned. I do think that it is important for teachers to stay on the forefront of what is available and expected in education both locally and nationally. Because online communities allow for national collaboration between both other teachers and experts in the field I do think this is a very powerful model for professional development.