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ECAP : VIDEOS TO HELP SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IMPLEMENT PLCS

Abstract:

Introduction

In Ontario, over the past few years, and despite some improvement in PISA test scores (CECM, 2012) and provincial testing (OQRE, 2014), studies have shown that Francophone students are still falling behind their Anglophone peers in several subjects, such as mathematics.

Since 2005, the Ontario Ministry of Education has been asking their principals to implement a new organizational structure: a professional learning community (PLC). This practice, if well developed, generates many benefits. For teachers, it provides a way of working which contributes to professional satisfaction and development, and reduces non-attendance (Linder, Post and Calabrese, 2012). For students, we observed higher academic success and reduced absenteeism (Hord and Sommers, 2008).

Several studies show that principals do not know how to implement PLCs because they have not received the required training (Cranston, 2007). Moreover, Marshall (2010) argues that some principals do not have the necessary competencies to implement PLCs.

Background

Educators recognize the importance of shifting learning from the individual process prevalent in traditional schools, to a collaborative process that is aligned with the aim to improve student learning (DuFour, DuFour and Eaker, 2008). However, a few research studies have been conducted in primary and secondary Francophone schools in Ontario Leclerc and Moreau (2011) identified some conditions that principals must apply to successfully implement PLCs: vision/mission, collaborative culture, scheduled meetings and analysis of student data.

Since studies have proven that a professional learning community contributes to professional development for teachers and academic success for students, the Ministry of Education strongly encourages principals to implement one in their school. To apply this new organizational structure, principals need the required competencies and knowledge regarding the conditions favoring the implementation of a PLC. Whereas some schools are considered advanced in their application of this model, others do not know how to implement the necessary changes (Isabelle, Génier, Davidson and Lamothe, 2013).

Methodology

The aim of our study is to investigate how schools with advanced PLCs have been able to apply this novel structure. We performed qualitative research in eight elementary and secondary schools in Ontario. We interviewed and filmed eight principals, twenty teachers and three education leaders.

Results

In addition to the common conditions previously identified as necessary for the implementation of a PLC, other key elements were discovered: responsibility for student success, commitment from the

district school board, etc. Besides these results, online resources (videos) from eCAP will also be presented at the conference.

Keywords:

professional learning community ; school principal; academic success

JEL Classification: I29, I24, I20