

USD 116 New Teacher Mentoring Program



March 2010

Providing program insight to School Board members, administrators, new teachers and mentors

I'm a buddy!

Wikipedia defines The Buddy System as “a procedure in which two people, the buddies, operate together as a single unit so that they are able to monitor and help each other.” This system is officially used in the armed forces, scuba diving, firefighting and scouting. But what about creating a buddy system in new teacher mentoring? Our Urbana High School teachers have done just that.

This year’s new teachers and mentors at UHS have developed a Buddy System of their own and even went so far as to design t-shirts to represent their bond as a group. It all originated from a social gathering early in the school year. “...walking between places we realized that someone wasn’t with us, so we said we should use the buddy system,” David Reif, UHS new teacher, explains. “Then we just started calling each other buddy.” Caroline Leighton, also a UHS new teacher, says that this “has evolved into us saying ‘Buddy!’ and hi-fiving each time we see each other in the halls.”

Yet, that is just the beginning. Their Buddy System clearly goes deeper than just calling each other buddy and slapping hi-fives in the halls. Melissa Welch, UHS mentor and Induction Coordinator, explains that “this group just really tends to mesh well and we hang out a bit outside of school too. We have buddy Thursday nights where we try to get dinner somewhere.”

“I think this year’s group of new teachers/mentors have worked well at acclimating each other to the UHS environment, but have also been a great support network for any ups and downs that any of us are facing,” new teacher Kristen Bartholomew states.

The teachers in the buddy group feel very close to each other. They can depend on each other. They turn to each other first and foremost. “While we are a very diverse group of people,” Reif says, “we have meshed very well. We are at different stages in our lives and come from very different backgrounds, but we don’t let that separate us. We know we are there for each other no matter what. We make time for each other both in and out of school. The fact that we are diverse means that each person brings their own unique qualities to the group and makes it better.”

David Reif honestly says that he isn’t sure how he would be doing in his first year of teaching without his buddies. They encourage him and comfort him. As a first-year teacher who moved away from home to attend school at the U of I and then stayed to take his first job, he is far removed from his family. Yet, he says that his new buddies have become his family.

Summing it all up, Caroline Leighton describes their relationship as “just being there for each other to make each other’s days brighter.”

THE LATEST & GREATEST PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP OFFERINGS



Looking Back and Looking Ahead: January 12, 2010

At this mid-year workshop, new teachers were given an opportunity to evaluate their progress during the first semester as well as to make plans for the remainder of the year. In one of those activities, Gregg Delgadillo, 3rd grade new teacher at Wiley, works with his tablemates Betty Allen, Wiley mentor, and Allison McLemore, 3rd grade new teacher at Yankee Ridge, (pictured left) to describe what each of the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards looks like in the classroom. This was followed by a self-ranking using the Illinois Continuum of Teacher Development where teachers choose one of four levels of development under each standard: Emerging, Applying, Integrating or Innovating. Teachers were then encouraged to plan next steps which would push their practice to the next developmental level.

Finishing up the night, all 37 participants headed to the UMS Computer Lab to take their mid-year survey. Once again, teachers were asked to evaluate themselves on the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards as well as respond to questions about the mentoring support provided to them during the year.



Looking at Student Work: Wednesday, March 3, 2010



A total of eighteen new teachers and mentors attended this workshop which essentially focused on the hot topics of formative assessment and differentiation. New teachers were asked to bring a set of papers, projects or assessments with them so they could evaluate them based on the essential curricular standard(s) and then sort them into four piles: exceeds, meets, below and warning. Following the sort, they determined supports to put into place in order to meet the needs of all four groups of students. Lisa Ferguson, new teacher at Leal, works with her mentor Linda Zimmerman (left) to evaluate her second graders' work and complete the four-pile sort and support plan.

At the end of the night, groups were asked to come up with solutions to the dilemma teachers face every day: How do I meet the needs of four different groups of students in my classroom *tomorrow*? Answers ranged from grouping students and tiering their assignments, to peer tutoring, to providing enrichment and reteaching. The conversations were wonderful and rich and the suggestions were useable and practical for classroom teachers.



Coming Up: Teaching with Technology

Tuesday, April 13 from 4:00 - 6:00
UMS 1520 & Computer Labs

Register by emailing jbredemeier@usd116.org

Teachers from elementary, middle and high school classrooms will share best practice technology application in separate mini-conference style breakout sessions. You will be able to select from a menu of options and attend sessions which interest you the most. Sign up now!