

School Visit Assignment

Joel Besancon

Contact Information

Name: Mrs. Kristin Jagger

Title: Principal

Phone Number: (330) 928-8974

Address: 1930 Bronson Ave.
Peninsula, Ohio

E-Mail: [Contact via e-mail](#)

Date: 3/24/17

Time: 4:00

School Profile

Number of Students: 428

Grade Level Span: 3-5

“Type”: Suburban

Number of Teachers: 27

School Profile

Students	Number	Pct
Am. Indian/Alaskan Native	NC	
Asian or Pacific Islander	24	5.4%
Black, Non-Hispanic	96	22.1%
Hispanic	20	4.7%
Multiracial	32	7.3%
White, Non-Hispanic	263	60.6%
Students with Disabilities	56	12.8%
Economic Disadvantage	109	25.2%
Limited English Proficiency	25	5.9%
Migrant	NC	

Why did you choose this school?

I chose this school due to professional connections with teachers in the building. Also, I was familiar with the school district because the superintendent of Woodridge Local Schools (Walter Davis) spoke to our School Finance class this past Summer. I also had an interest in this school because I prefer the intermediate (3-5) grade levels.

What were your expectations?

- I had background information from hearing Mr. Davis' presentation, so that was beneficial.
 - Although we have a similar enrollment, our building is K-5 and WIS is 3-5.
 - Coming from a smaller, rural school, I knew the atmosphere would be different.
 - I was interested about how their grade-level teams were configured and their daily schedule.
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What happened?

Due to the fact that I visited outside the school day, I wasn't able to get a full understanding of the climate of the building. There were several teachers in the building, but there was nothing "structured" happening after the school day had ended. I talked with Mrs. Jagger to obtain background information about how teams functioned at each grade level. I also asked questions about the daily schedule in relation to instructional minutes by content area and curriculum materials. The conversation focused on collaboration within each grade level, and then transitioned to collaboration across grades 3-5. The entire interview took place in the main entrance to the school and the office.

What did you learn?

The 3rd grade teams are two-person teams. The 4th grade team is comprised of two teams. Each team has one language arts teacher and one math teacher. The teams share one science teacher and one social studies teacher. There are two three-person teams at the 5th grade level. There is “Collegial Planning” time that is every Thursday morning for 45 minutes. Teachers at each grade level meet to discuss OIP goals and/or grade level specific topics. The content area teachers meet for vertical alignment monthly for 45 minutes during this same time. During the vertical alignment meetings, standards across grade levels are discussed and instructional strategies are aligned. Grading practices are aligned for language arts teams by using common rubrics for specific types of assignments, but not overall course grades. Math content areas have discussed grading practices, but they are not aligned across grade levels.

How does this school compare with your school in regards to addressing the challenge? Resources? Problem-solving process? Measuring outcomes? Inclusive committee membership throughout problem-solving?

The main advantage that WIS has is that they have at least 2 teachers at each grade level that teach the same content and they meet weekly. Their staff is very integrated and consistent across grade levels when considering their resources. This allows for much more collaboration. They have vertical meetings monthly, which is what our goal will be for next school year. Although we view this as a challenge, it appears that this as an expectation at WIS since it has been implemented for a more extended period of time. I would be interested to see a meeting to view the problem-solving process and how they measure outcomes. Their teachers understand their role and how it fits into the school. Special education teachers and paraprofessionals are all included in discussions.

What research supports the proposed solutions being implemented at the school you visited?

There was not any research cited during the school visit, however, here are links to articles that I have found to support the necessity of vertical meetings.

http://www.stanleycrawford.com/uploads/3/7/3/1/37319703/increasing_instructional_capacity_through_vertical_teaming.pdf

<http://www.literacyinlearningexchange.org/sites/default/files/something-to-talk-about.pdf>

How will you use this experience, insight, or research to deepen your understanding of the challenges facing your school?

It was helpful to see how another school collaborated both within grade level teams and vertical teams. It goes to show the importance of meeting vertically for my school. It's very easy for teachers in my school to feel like they're isolated in their content. Vertical meetings can be very powerful to align content across grade levels to benefit not only teachers, but students, parents, and other school community members as well.

Share this experience with your principal. What were her/his reactions? To what extent, if any, will teachers be afforded opportunities to meet with the teachers from that school to improve student learning? Why or why not?

My principal found it very advantageous to be able to meet with teachers who teach the same content at the same grade level (as WIS is able to do). This has led to the possibility of partnering with a neighboring school district to promote a professional, collaborative relationship. We discussed the time and monetary resources needed to make this happen, but feel that the potential result of facilitating these meetings will outweigh the costs. We will continue to meet vertically and hope to begin meeting with other grade level content teachers next school year.

What did you learn about yourself as an aspiring school leader? To what extent, if any, do school leaders reach out to other school leaders/community leaders? Why or why not?

I think that it's important to realize that there is someone else that is facing the same challenges that we are facing, and that they can be resources for us. We also have the opportunity to be a resource for surrounding schools in other community's. Open and honest communication can provide opportunities for collaboration that can have a positive impact on the education that our students and families deserve.
