Differentiated Assistance Podcast Notes

Mother Lode Union School District

"As we are making changes, I hear their voices (teachers)... as how can we build a system or structure that supports inclusive practices, best practices, and differentiated instruction that will meet the needs of all our students, not just students with disabilities, not just English learners, but all students." *Marcy Guthrie, Superintendent, Mother Lode Union School District*

Purpose: The CCEE interviewed education leaders from Mother Lode Union School District and the El Dorado County Office of Education to identify and document lessons learned from implementing Differentiated Assistance (DA) within a continuous improvement process.

Audience: County office and school district personnel responsible for engaging in differentiated assistance.

Time Commitment: ~30 minutes to listen to Episode 12 of the California School Field Trip. Bonus material included in the DA Toolkit, including Episode 1 of the California School Field Trip.

Key Takeaways:

- **Vision** that supports *Systems Change*
- **Distributed Leadership** or *Leading from the Middle*
- **Relationships** that build *Trust*

Episode Highlights

Segment/Theme	Time	Resources/Notes
Introduction	[00:48]	What is Differentiated Assistance? • Eligibility for Differentiated Assistance is based on LEA student performance on the California School Dashboard. To learn more about the Dashboard, you can visit the *CCEE's Dashboard 101 Toolkit*. What is Continuous Improvement? • "Improvement in outcomes requiring a persistent effort over time ...that requires a change in culture, capacity building for people at all levels of the system, and availability and use of data" from Continuous Improvement in Practice: https://www.edpolicyinca.org/publications/continuous-improvement-in-practice

Differentiated Assistance Podcast Notes

Segment/Theme	Time	Resources/Notes
		• "Holistic and research-based approach to education grounded in the belief that every system is designed to achieve the results it gets" from Supporting Continuous Improvement at Scale: https://www.edpolicyinca.org/publications/supporting-continuous-improvement-scale
Overview of Key Takeaways	[05:11]	Educators across the state can learn from this example because the Mother Lode/El Dorado team clearly articulates for us three key takeaways that have impacted their DA process:
Vision		• First, the team provides a clear collective **Vision** that supports *Systems Change* that really transitions from the simple structural changes within the system in Year 1 of DA to the more transformative or shifts in their actual mindsets in year 2 of DA.
Leadership		• Second, it is through this collective vision and confidence as a team, that allowed them to really emphasize **Distributed Leadership** or what they described as "Leading from the Middle."
Relationships		• Finally, they emphasize **Relationships** and establishing a level of **Interdependence** that builds trust and effective group dynamics which then allows them to be more adaptive and responsive as a team.
Context and Collaboration	[06:38]	• More information on the new Dashboard indicator, Chronic Absenteeism, can be located in the CCEE's *Data and Evaluation: Spotlight on Chronic Absenteeism Toolkit*. This toolkit includes the Attendance Works resources that Deputy Superintendent Monsma referenced. • Approaches to Reducing Chronic Absenteeism: https://edpolicyinca.org/sites/default/files/CIB_Perry_July-2019.pdf • Interactive Map of Chronic Absenteeism: https://edsource.org/2019/interactive-map-californias-chronically-absent-students-in-2017-18/613074
Vision	[07:36]	Systems Change: • The Water of Systems Change https://www.fsg.org/publications/water_of_systems_change
Relationships	[09:53]	Relationships-Group Dynamics: • Trust • Deep data analyses • Honesty and transparency
Leadership	[11:44]	Approaching Leadership with Curiosity and Humility
Solutions and Strategies	[13:03]	Microlearning: • Strategy to introduce solutions consistently over time in small "doses or drips" to boost knowledge, understanding, and confidence to implement.

Differentiated Assistance Podcast Notes

Segment/Theme	Time	Resources/Notes
		• Principals served as "Lead learners" who engaged in micro professional learning to bring information on solutions and strategies back to teachers and staff to support differentiated instruction. • This approach introduces training effectiveness with reinforcement (Iannone & Torgerson, 2019) https://blog.bullcitylearning.com/webinar-recording-demystifying-microlearning-for-learning-leaders
Relationships	[15:59]	Strategies as a Framework: • EDCOE realigned their leadership and focused on UDL from a leader's perspective to better support Mother Lode's microlearning approach. Connecting with similar COEs: • Rural Education Network • California Rural Resource Bank
Vision	[16:55] [20:05]	Root Causes: • Staying the course and going deeper Culture of Continuous Improvement: • Engaging families and other stakeholders in the process
Leadership	[20:50] [22:01]	Engaging Teachers: • Advocates for change Leading from the Middle: • What is Leading from the Middle? Definition from Andy Hargreaves (http://www.andyhargreaves.com/) for the Center for Collaborative Education https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1s37RQkRLY • Leading from the Middle (paper that defines the theoretical framework) https://www.hkr.se/globalassets/avdelningar/uppdrag-ab/dokumentation/leading_from_the_middle_final.pdf
Advice and Reflections	[22:45]	Incremental vs. Fixed Growth: • DA eligibility is based on a normative reference, namely, how LEAs are performing on the Dashboard relative to a state level distribution. The Mother Lode/El Dorado team clarified that evaluating Dashboard performance is just the first step, and that there is no downside to starting early with this analysis. • However, what is important within the continuous improvement cycle is helping LEAs make the shift from a normative comparison process to a self-referenced process or growth mindset. The COEs collaborate with districts in making this shift by providing support and a framework to "get the work done" and open up the "DA" support to non-DA eligible LEAs. • This growth mindset within a systems approach allows the Mother Lode/El Dorado team to really reflect on the process so far and

Segment/Theme	Time	Resources/Notes
		prepare for the steps moving forward, most likely, to a year 3 DA in a manner that measures self "system" growth.
	[25:02]	Incremental Growth on the California School Dashboard: • No red performance level (representing status and change) for the state indicators
Summary of Lessons Learned Vision Leadership Relationships	[27:40]	Here is a summary of the three key takeaways and the lessons learned that the Mother Lode and El Dorado team shared throughout the podcast: • When we heard about the **Vision** for DA, we learned that this vision was developed as a team, and from this was a concerted effort to shift the conditions that hold the problem practices in place. Superintendent Guthrie detailed structural changes that were made to support teachers with differentiated instruction, and that the introduction of microlearning as a professional learning strategy continually provided information in a user-friendly format for school site leaders to implement MTSS and UDL. From the county office perspective, the importance of starting early, engaging quickly, being thoughtful and most importantly reflective was emphasized. All of the changes that were initiated in Year 1 and evolved over time through Year 2 reflect the progression to transformative change and shifting mental models or mindsets. This really supports the current research on systems change. • We learned more about the approach to **Distributed Leadership** or "Leading from the Middle." Because the continuous improvement process is not a clean linear process, but more iterative and dynamic, the team needed to adapt from Year 1 to Year 2. Rather than having chronic absenteeism derail the DA process, this indicator was used as an opportunity to go deeper and connect to the other indicators in need of improvement. Assessing the interrelationship among these variables from a systems perspective requires leadership at all levels. • Finally, it's all about **Relationships** and an important aspect is establishing a deep sense of trust. Foundational to relationships across the system is trust, and this takes time and it's also helpful to keep the same members on the team. Learning from their relationship with Marcy and the Mother Lode district, the county office was able to do their own restructuring internally, and change their practices working with districts across the county region.

Differentiated Assistance Podcast Notes

Contact Information

Michelle Magyar, Senior Manager, Continuous Improvement, mmagyar@ccee-ca.org

Marcy Guthrie, Superintendent, Mother Lode Union School District, mguthrie@mlusd.net

Tamara Clay, Director, El Dorado County Office of Education, SELPA, tclay@edcoe.org

Kevin Monsma, Deputy Superintendent, El Dorado County Office of Education, kmonsma@edcoe.org

"Start early and engage quickly…now you have time to be really thoughtful." *Kevin Monsma, Deputy Superintendent, EDCOE*

"As someone who has been in Special Education for over 20 years…it's not about Special Education. That's a conversation we've been waiting to have for decades, it's really building systems that are meeting the needs of every student." *Tamara Clay, Director, EDCOE SELPA*

"Systems work takes time and I have to make that ok for myself." *Marcy Guthrie, Superintendent, Mother Lode Union School District*

If you are interested in learning more about the CCEE toolkits, please visit our Resources Collection