

Improving the Practice of Powerful Learning

Learning facilitators (i.e. teachers) in Coalition congregations strive to design powerful learning experiences that impact learners. They can improve their practice through an ongoing process of self-reflection, goal setting, feedback and peer coaching. The steps outlined below will help you use the Powerful Learning Observation Tool to build practical understanding of powerful learning in your congregation, develop shared language, and continually improve learning design.

Steps to Improve Powerful Learning

1. Identify Powerful Learning in Practice

- Use the Powerful Learning Observation Tool to help learning facilitators (teachers) to develop a clear picture of what the four design principles look like in action. The Tool breaks down the design principles into components and examples.
- Encourage learning facilitators to reflect on past learning experiences (lessons) to identify where they have effectively applied design principles and where they need to grow.

2. Set Clear Goals with Each Learning Facilitator:

- Use the components and/or examples of design principle implementation in the Powerful Learning Observation Tool to select goals for the year. You can either use the full tool or the condensed version. Help each learning facilitator pick *one or two* individual goals to work on during the year or during a particular unit of learning.
- Ask what help or support the learning facilitators might need, and from whom, to be able to improve this practice.

3. Select Methods for Observation and Feedback:

- **Self-Reflection:** Each person can use the Powerful Learning Observation Tool as a rubric to reflect on his or her own practice.
- **Director Observation:** The director can observe each facilitator's practice individually, using a customized or condensed Powerful Learning Observation Tool to observe learning facilitators in action (e.g. in walk-throughs).

Questions For Planning Observations and Feedback:

- How will you notice change; who is in a good position to observe your progress (e.g., education director, peer(s), self-reflection, or feedback from learners)?
- When should you schedule observations and documentation? What is a reasonable amount of time to see progress in your identified goals?
- What's a good way to document the observation and feed it back to you along the way?

3. Select Methods for Observation and Feedback (*continued*):

- **Peer-Observation:** Learning facilitators can use the tool to observe each other and provide feedback either individually or by “unpacking” their observations as a group. Certain members of staff may be more naturally adept at one area or another; as a leader who builds community, this gives you an opportunity to enable staff to teach one another how to build skills by setting goals for their own learning and seeking one another out as mentors and guides.
- **Combination:** Choose a combination of these approaches that best fits your situation and resources.

4. Reflect, Unpack Helpers and Obstacles, and Start the Cycle Over:

- First, review progress toward the goals each learning facilitator set.

Progress Review Questions

- How did it go? How much progress toward your goals was evident? What changed in the learning experience and the outcomes learners were able to achieve? How do you know?
- What helped you make progress and/or what got in the way?
- In the future, what would help strengthen the factors that contributed to your progress? How can I help remove obstacles?

- Next, take a few moments to reflect with each individual and/or with a team of educators working as a professional learning community and then begin the cycle again.

Reflection Questions

- Pausing for a moment to reflect, what did you learn about the particular design principle, component, or example that you focused on?
- What did you learn about how to go about incorporating new design principles and components into your practice?
- What changed, if anything, in your understanding of yourself as a facilitator of other people’s learning?
- What questions bubbled up for you as you worked on this design principle or component?

- Finally, look back at the Powerful Learning Observation Tool to identify what each staff person would like to focus on next. Discuss the following: Based on the learning facilitator’s growth and the congregation’s overall learning vision, what makes this an important design principle or component to address next?

From here you can cycle back to Step Two and keep cycling through.