



Peck Slip Teachers' Thoughts on Professional Development

Continued learning and professional growth are essential to building a community of skilled and motivated teachers. Teachers and school administrators support one another through observations and inter-visitation. However, it is with the guidance of trained staff developers who are experts in their fields that much of this crucial professional learning occurs. At Peck Slip, teachers benefit from regular meetings with math and literacy coaches who guide our curriculum development, inform our teaching practice, and challenge us to try new things which in turn creates a rich and rigorous learning environment for our students. Professional development is important for us all!

--Thea Sachs

I could not do this job without professional development. Having worked at schools where teachers meet to discuss their own teaching but never with the benefit of an objective, outsider vantage point, I cannot overstate what a difference, an expert outsider makes. After so many years in this job, in this field, I'm not done. I'll never be done, and that is perhaps what keeps me teaching and exploring. It's the outsider's eye from a math specialist at metamorphosis that helps me cultivate a new investigation and fine tune it to the needs of my students. It's the brain-storming, observation and critique from our literacy specialist that helps me create an environment where students are excited, where I am excited, to learn and grow. There is simply no substitute for this vital and rich work and I am, we are, so fortunate to have a school culture that places such high value on teacher development and learning. Whatever you feel when you look around and view a teacher here, whichever positive traits you associate with them and their classroom style, you are responding to our craft. And a craft, like anything, is learned, and cultivated through endless pursuit of new innovation. This can only be done through professional development and teacher learning. I am the sum of my education, which started when I was younger, but continues to be an imperative part of my growth as I attempt the important work of teaching your children.

--Gretchen Lustig

I count myself lucky to work at Peck Slip for many reasons. One of the biggest reasons I am thankful to work here is that Maggie (backed by the PTA) is always willing to allow/find me the resources I need to improve my craft. Teaching is a subtle art that is always changing and reacting to both students and greater world circumstances. The chance to work with consultants here at Peck Slip, and to go out and learn from other experts, has been instrumental in making me a better teacher.

This year alone I was able to work in-house with Renee and Jaime to create and revise meaningful and rigorous curriculum. We analyze student work and use that to determine what they will need and how I can support them in getting there. Renee has taught me how to think mathematically in my own life (seriously - I love math now!) and how to help children understand the skills and concepts they will need to move forward academically. I have learned how to encourage children to take risks and apply complex thinking to a variety of contexts.

Outside of school I have learned about supporting children's social and emotional needs through discussions about quality literature. I have spent full weeks over the summer immersed in multiplication, division and fractions. I have learned about the Hochman Writing Method which supports all students in understanding how language is transformed from speech into the written word, from the sentence level to full paragraph structure. I have learned about the nuances of Autism Spectrum Disorder and how to support children who may be struggling with questions of identity based around gender.

None of this would be possible with the support of the PTA. The teachers here truly benefit from being able to learn ourselves about what we teach your children and about how to best help them discover and internalize it.

--Sarah Rookwood