

Critical Friends Meeting

October 13, 2009

Notes

The second meeting of the school year was well attended with ten representatives from the charter schools and eight staff from the Office of Charter Schools.

The meeting began with a presentation by Dr. Larry Smith, from Professor Garfield. Dr. Smith is a member of the Department of Elementary Education at Ball State. The web site Professor Garfield was started six years ago by Jim Davis and Ball State University. It focuses on reading strategies and other learning tools for children of all ages. Called one of the best websites for children by the Today show, Professor Garfield offers a variety of learning experiences in reading, writing, and art. The address for the free site is www.professorgarfield.org. Charter schools are invited to sign up for log ins at the site address. There are many standards based activities, and even a Teacher's Lounge that offers content by grade.

Bob Marra spoke about the Response to Intervention process. He shared a handout and commended the leaders of our charter schools for their hard work on RTI. Bob stressed using data to make decisions about instruction for all of our students, but especially the special needs population. Bob will be able to share best practices with schools. Larry suggested that charter schools that Ball State sponsors contact Bob for further information.

Larry and Peter talked about the two year contract the Office of Charter Schools has signed with Dr. Brian Carpenter to provide board training to BSU charter schools. The training consists of a pre-assessment, one day of training, a post assessment, and materials by Dr. Carpenter. If seventy-five percent of the board attends the training, OCS will pay for half of the cost. Dr. Carpenter plans to train six or more schools each year. To date three schools are working with Dr. Carpenter. If there is interest from other schools to work with Dr. Carpenter, please contact Larry Gabbert to discuss.

Shirley Hall and Vanessa Chapman are working on NWEA together, since Mary Baker's position was phased out at the end of May. Shirley would like to be notified when schools participate in NWEA training, so that she knows how to send out the invoices. OCS will pay for the school's portion of the licensing of regular MAP this year in the hopes that the saved money will be used for training. Any school with growth targets at or below forty-five percent will be encouraged to provide the training. Schools could offer workshops to help each other to drill down into the data. On-site training with NWEA is very expensive, but there is off-site and on-line training-Knowledge Academy is free to schools, and is a good tool for new staff members.

There will be a call for information for the Annual Accountability Report in June. Shirley would like to set the deadline for the 2010-11 Accountability Plan for July. It was suggested that the titles be changed in AOIS so that people know which plan goes where. It was also noted that the graphic of the plan does not open on our web site- we checked and found that it did work. People who are having trouble with this or any other link should call their field representative or the Office of Charter Schools so that we can troubleshoot. Shirley also mentioned that she was trying to get the color coding back on the Accountability documents.

The Office of Charter Schools newsletter will be published on December 1, 2009. Please contact your field representative if you have suggestions or questions about the newsletter. The second edition of this year's newsletter will be published in spring 2010.

Peter asked if schools had any creative ideas to share about usage of stimulus dollars. Most school leaders talked about technology, new staff, materials, and special education support as uses for these dollars.

Georgette asked if members of Critical Friends disseminate the information in their region, and Larry reminded everyone that notes from the meetings are sent to all school leaders.

Laurie is working on a "Welcome" packet for new board members. Further information about the Welcome packet will be distributed at the November 16 meeting of the Critical Friends.

The next meeting will be held on Monday, November 16 at the Ball State downtown Indianapolis Center at 50 South Meridian Street.