



Austin Independent School District

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REFLECTIONS ON QTEL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: AISD BUILDING THE BASE, AUGUST 2009

Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL) is a teacher professional development (PD) program based on an apprenticeship model of learning and teaching. Participants are immersed in pedagogy and best practices, and as they develop their expertise, they take on increasing levels of responsibility. QTEL, developed by WestEd, has been contracted to provide this program to three high schools by the Office of Redesign. Lanier and International High Schools are entering their third year of the program. In these two schools, the nested model of development includes four levels of work. First, it aims to make every teacher at each of the schools able to design and enact quality lessons in his or her discipline. Second, it helps a subset of these teachers gain more knowledge to coach their subject matter peers. Third, it prepares an even smaller group of these teachers to become school professional developers. Finally, it also provides support for the educational leadership so they can actively support their teachers as they engage in the daily work. Reagan is entering its first year of QTEL. For a detailed description of this program, visit the QTEL website or review DPE Publication 09.08. This report summarizes feedback from teachers who attended a PD program about QTEL led by Austin Independent School District (AISD) teachers who have become professional developers in the QTEL program, an activity that is part of the third goal discussed above.

DESCRIPTION OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As part of the apprenticeship model, AISD teachers participating in QTEL are progressing toward certification, to become QTEL specialists themselves, also known as professional developers. This is a key component to WestEd's model for sustaining QTEL in school districts. A participant must accomplish several milestones to become a professional developer. The first milestone is a written component. The second milestone is leading a PD institute while being coached by WestEd colleagues. To facilitate the second milestone, the Office of Redesign coordinated a Building the Base Institute (BTB) at Reagan High School on August 3 through 5. BTB is an in-depth introduction to QTEL that is part of the Summer Institute training available from WestEd and is led by QTEL specialists. This BTB was led by three AISD teachers who are becoming professional developers (i.e., one teacher from Lanier and two teachers from International). These three presenters collaborated with WestEd's director of QTEL, Aída Walqui, to refine the BTB presentations and prepare the workshop. Thus, the BTB was a two-tiered PD program; it was a program for the professional developers and for the teachers who attended workshop.

Principals from several high schools across the district identified teachers for participation, as did principals from select middle schools. Teachers from schools participating in

QTEL comprised 64% of the attendees (Tables 1 and 2). Lanier sent teachers who were new to the school (including teachers new to the profession). International sent new teachers and returning teachers, as a support for collegiality. Reagan sent teachers who were identified as potential campus leaders. Participants in BTB were alphabetically assigned to the three presenters to encourage heterogeneity in all groups. Groups stayed with their presenters for all 3 days, except the end of day 1, when Dr. Walqui provided a keynote presentation. Teacher attendance was managed by the Office of Redesign. Seventy-four percent of the participants attended all 3 days.

Table 1. Distribution of BTB Attendance, by Campus.

Campus	Number	Percentage
International	13	26.0
Reagan	11	22.0
Lanier	8	16.0
Anderson	5	10.0
Crockett	5	10.0
District Representative	3	6.0
Mendez	2	4.0
Bedicheck	1	2.0
Eastside	1	2.0
O. Henry	1	2.0
TOTAL	50	100

Source. Sign-in sheets from BTB, 2009

Table 2. Distribution of BTB Attendance, by Discipline.

Discipline	Number	Percentage
Administration	13	26.0
ELA	11	22.0
Math	9	18.0
Science	8	16.0
Social Studies	4	8.0
ESL	4	8.0
Elective	1	2.0
TOTAL	50	100

Source. Sign-in sheets from BTB, 2009

RESULTS OF THE REFLECTION SURVEY

The QTEL program manager in the Office of Redesign invited all participants present at the conclusion of this PD program to complete a reflection form/survey to provide feedback about their experience during the PD program. The reflection form was developed through collaboration between the Office and Redesign and the Department of Program Evaluation. The form measured participants’ views about the quality, effectiveness, and utility of the BTB presentations and content.

There were 39 unduplicated responses to the reflection survey, a response rate of 78% of all 50 attendees. Raw data from the reflection forms were entered in SurveyMonkey® for analysis. The first four items on the survey were designed to collect data about the respondents and are not reported here. Items 5 through 8 were designed to collect “reflection” data. The percentages shown are based on valid data (i.e., do not include missing data). Percentages are sorted to place the highest percentage in the first row.

All respondents answered at least part of Item 5. Respondents either agreed or strongly agreed the PD program was valuable, engaging, useful, and utilitarian. A high proportion of respondent strongly agreed with all of the statements in Item 5.

Table 3. Distribution of Responses to Item 5, “Please indicate the extent you agree with the following statements regarding the Building the Base Institute (BTB).”

Answer option	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	n
I will use strategies I learned at the BTB in my classroom.	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.3	89.7	35
The BTB was a high-quality, valuable use of my professional development time.	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.4	84.0	33
The BTB training was engaging and communicated clearly.	0.0	0.0	0.0	18.0	82.1	32
The presenter used effective presentation skills.	0.0	0.0	0.0	18.0	82.1	32
The content and material of the BTB were useful and informative.	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.5	79.5	31

Source. BTB Reflection Form data, 2009

Item 6 was asked to measure whether participants in the AISD BTB would translate the PD program into classroom practice. All respondents stated they would incorporate at least three strategies they learned in BTB in their classrooms.

Table 4. Distribution of Responses to Item 6, “Please complete the following statement, ‘I learned __ strategies I am confident I will use in my practice.’”

Number of strategies	Number (n = 39)	Percentage
4+	32	82.1
3	7	18.0
2
1
TOTAL	39	100

Source. Reflection Form data, 2009

As a second gauge of the utility of BTB, participants were asked to identify their interest in receiving additional QTEL training during the 2009–2010 academic year. All but one respondent reported a definitive interest in additional QTEL PD programs.

Table 5. Distribution of Responses to Item 7, “How interested are you in continuing your participation in QTEL training this academic year (2009-2010)?”

Answer Option	Number (n = 39)	Percentage
I am interested	38	97.4
I am somewhat interested	1	2.6
I am not interested
I am not sure
TOTAL	39	100

Source. Reflection Form data, 2009

Item 8 was open-ended; responses were organized thematically. Respondents to this item could be counted in more than one theme; thus, the cumulative percentage exceeded 100% and is not reported in Table 6. Teachers reported a variety of topics about which they would like further QTEL PD programs. Nearly 46% reported interest in a content-specific PD program for math and science. Content-focused PD programs have been planned for the fall semester of the 2009–2010 academic year.

Table 6. Distribution of Responses to Item 8, “Please complete the following statement, ‘In future QTEL PD sessions, I would be interested in learning more about....’”

Theme for open-ended responses	Number (n = 35)	Percentage
How to assess/address individual student needs (including differentiation strategies)	10	28.6
Need examples specific to math	9	25.7
Need additional, specific examples on implementation	7	20.0
Need examples specific to science	7	20.0
Overall positive comment about PD programs	7	20.0
Additional emphasis on theoretical underpinnings of QTEL	5	14.3
Want one-on-one coaching with classroom observations	4	11.4
Using QTEL strategies to meet state objectives	2	5.7

Source. Reflection Form data, 2009

SUMMARY

Overall, respondents of the reflection survey reported the BTB PD program as valuable, effective, and useful. Given the success of this BTB, the Office of Redesign is coordinating with WestEd to schedule another BTB led by an AISD teacher in Spring 2010. This BTB will help an additional seven teachers on the path to QTEL certification reach their second milestone.

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