**Dream IT Project-Phase 2 Sussan Oladipo**

My dream IT project is titled **Optimal Learning and the Model Classroom.** My motivation for this project is that learning is a big part of who I am. I seek opportunities to learn new ideas and being involved in a teaching and learning process.

To me, learning can be exciting as well as ambiguous. The outcome of any learning process depends on what the stakeholders bring to the table and how the stakeholders interact with other participants and the content. My project will cover content areas of reading and science but the goal is to cover all content areas.

I am currently part of a K-8 school leadership with responsibilities that are instructional and administrative in nature. I work with the principal to plan professional development, support classroom instructional practices, create safe school environment, monitor the systems and structures we have in place and work with parent and community members to support our students. My work time ranges FROM 6:30am to 7:00pm. Sometimes it extends beyond this time. The brutal truth is that I am always working round the clock (including working at home) depending on the things I need to do. Considering my context and what I do, **Optimal Learning and the Creation of a model classroom** will be my ultimate goal for teaching. I would like to explain how and why these ideas are key to instructional leadership, their existence, essential knowledge base and methods of developing and forms of representing this knowledge base.

Optimal learning and the creation of a model classroom are key to instructional leadership because the goal of our school instructional leadership is to maximize learning for all students and to ensure that every teacher is providing opportunities for students to learn. The opportunities according to Robert Mazano’s ***Classroom Instruction that Works*** is indicated by the structures the school has set to enable each student have access to the essential elements of all content curriculum. Another indicator is the time afforded the students to acquire mastery of the critical skills, concepts and processes they are expected to learn.

Some of the systems, structures we have created as well as the instructional tools at our disposal Include the following: a set of criteria of how classrooms should be structured such as the availability of library books, book check out system, classroom rules and other management system, usage of instructional times, instructional observation and feedback, lesson planning, unit planning, grade level meeting, Instructional Leadership meeting, two way communication with parent, student goal setting, teacher goal setting, learning cycles, powerful practice and problem of practice.

Our leadership team works with the aforementioned teams of teacher leaders to build instructional capacity of each member of our team. The above structures and systems support this effort. For example, our ILT oversaw the peer observation event we had last year by setting up the protocol, guiding the process, gathering data and analyzing the data to inform next leadership action.

Our minimal expectation for the curriculum are that our teachers use the Common Core Standards as well as scope and sequence in the English Language Arts, Mathematics and other content to identify what students need to know and be able to do. We also identify specific content scope and sequence to be taught and then implement them using our school’s instructional model. The model we have adopted is the ***Gradual Release of Responsibility***. Our leadership team, made up of the principal and myself support our teachers in using these skills to drive the objectives of instruction. The Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) supports our teachers in monitoring the progress of this effort. We do Learning Walks and Peer Observations during which the ILT observe instruction and collect data about our model. We specifically look for when the teachers release by the students to practice the skills that have been taught. We are very observant about how students interact among themselves in the learning practice, what types of questions the teachers asks, what the teacher does during the times that the students are working individually or in groups. We ask that teachers circulate to support their students at this time. We observe to see that all students are using the instructional time to master the standards based objectives, which are aligned to the NWEA, and the PARCC assessments that students will be taking in March this year.

The essential knowledge base and methods of developing and forms of representing this knowledge base goes beyond knowing the critical skills that students are supposed to master. The learning styles, ability levels and other individual factors that impact learning are additional knowledge that classroom instructors and school leaders need to have to be effective in creating an optimal classroom for learning. Other areas of thinking that teachers and school leaders need to exercise are questions about indicators of learning within the classroom, how are students demonstrating learning, what are they doing? Are students using the content vocabulary, thinking in the content area, mastering the necessary skills and asking questions that enable them to process and build on new knowledge and new understanding?

Inquiry has emerged as a portion of a solution because it allows the teacher to drive learning through questioning. Students are able to work collaboratively on a project with little or no scaffolding while students are answering and asking guided questions, researching and acquiring mastery of multiple standard based skills. Simultaneously, teachers are facilitating learning, managing small group instruction, observing student learning behaviors, correcting misconceptions. Although the population of students at our school put every effort into their learning, it can turn passive if not driven by a strategy such as inquiry. Students will passively absorb the teacher lesson delivery without knowing the rationale or thinking through the content and asking questions.

Technology supports this inquiry learning in a very meaning way. It not only provides opportunity for interaction among students but also opportunity for teachers to work with their colleagues. Currently, Google Docs has been very effective among our team in sharing ideas, documents and work among our teachers. Blogging is another tool we are hoping to use as a means of interaction and sharing of ideas.

Technology is a high lever for our school. Our school has invested a lot of funds in technology. We have a one on one model of student per device. In addition, our students are highly interested in using technology to access new learning. We are both a Mac school and a PC school. Over 60% of our students have high technology skills. It becomes imperative for us to integrate technology into our daily instruction. We do that in many ways. Our schedules are structured to embed LA/TECH. The reading teacher co teaches with the technology teacher for one period of the two reading language arts periods. During this time, students learn a lot of technology skills they need to be successful in the different content areas. Students use PowerPoint including Prezi to present, they create videos, do research papers, they produce brochures, mini books, blog and take photo graphs in different dimensions to create learning and meaning from content and context.

In this project, I will be supporting teachers to have a consistent way to assess their own effectiveness as well as how their students progress in the learning process.

I will use the Chicago Public Schools framework for teaching to monitor and gather evidence of teaching performances. I will review the data with teachers and provide feedback. Technology plays a huge part in this. This year, I am using Google-Doc a whole lot. It has made it effective for me to provide feedback to teachers on lesson plans after they create and share it on Google Doc. I have also been able to share our individual teacher schedules via Google-Docs. All changes were live and it was easier to monitor it on line. I will also be using the CPS Reflect and Learn system, used to gather data from observation also has in built capacity that allows for observation data to be shared prior to pre-conference and post conference. The tool also has the communicative piece in which I email the teacher when data has been shared.

Peer observation is a way I will be using to document progress of teachers for the work. Classroom observations has provided me with opportunity to see how the teachers are implementing the inquiry learning and using technology in the science, math and language arts content areas. I triangulate my observation with that my principal and together we create a growth pathway for each teacher. Bambrick Santoyo in his book, Leverage Leadership argues about identifying leverage skills that each teacher could be supported in weekly. According to Bambrick, a leader needs to identify the skill. I will identify a skill a teacher needs support in, and provide feedback through coaching and then provide individualized professional development to support the work of each teacher around the lever.

Students’ performance will be used to monitor growth of the teacher in the specific skill being.

The image that resonates with me with respect to this idea is the skeletal framework. I believe every member in the learning process has something to contribute (adding flesh to the skeleton) and must not approach the process passively. My rationale for this is that the misconception that learners bring to the learning process is also part of the learning since un-learning is part of the learning process. My images of the skeleton and the poster of 100 things to do (doing is learning and un-doing is learning too) as well of my Explain it To Me video all depict this theme of learning. I also picture learning as a dance with so many moving parts that culminates in action packed fun and fulfillment.

These images and video are located on my web page suepo.weebly.com

My project began from the beginning of this year as I collect and lesson plans from teachers and read them. I am identifying the critical pieces that need to be included in each plan. My first classroom observation is on September 29th and I will be observing language arts, science and mathematics classrooms as well as other content areas. The critical areas I will be looking out for are those ones I described before. I will observe evidence of a learning classroom environment, the rapport that exists between teacher and students as well student and teacher behaviors during learning. The CPS framework for teaching rubric will guide me in collecting evidence of best practice.

My success in this project will be the quality of my observation data and the feedback I provide the teachers. I believe that this feedback will help each teacher to grow in the area of his or her deficiency, one lever at a time.

To support this work, I will be providing professional development to teachers on model classroom and optimal learning. I have done the first phase of this at our opening PD when I shared the documents and criteria for a model classroom and optimal instruction. I will present a phase two of this PD in small groups grade level meetings and then require teachers to effect the practice in my next cycle of observation.

I will be approaching this learning idea through an inquiry strategy where a lot of questioning is taking place among the teachers about the use of effective communication to tap into the learners pre-knowledge is happening. We will observe the videos of a model classroom and explicit depictions of what optimal learning is from the student perspective as well as what the teacher does to optimize learning.

As far as the content, I will model an English Language Arts session that transitions into science hands on inquiry session to demonstrate transition within a model classroom. Since my current job responsibilities require me to see all content areas, approaching this project from this angle will be most useful for me. In addition, my audiences are classroom teachers, sometimes fellow administrators with whom I network.

Pedagogically, I will be implementing an anticipatory guide during the professional development to tap prior knowledge, guided inquiry, discussion and gradual release of responsibility. Technology will play a big role in this process. I will be using videos, overhead projector, Internet search, wordle.net, laptops and ipads to document information, search websites and look. I will incorporate reading (close reading) with science (energy). Audio and video will be used to support auditory and visual learners.

In conclusion, my project is centered on Optima Learning: what it looks like using a model classroom. I will be exploring this from the content of reading and science, specifically using close reading and inquiry respectively.

This project has many phases and indicators of success. However my ultimate success is in the growth of teacher skills for inquiry and gradual release of responsibility/learning to the students. It is also in the way the teachers structure their classrooms for learning as well as the students achievement in the various formative, interim, summative assessments as well as in being independent learners and critical thinkers. This project was started from the beginning of the year and will continue to the end of the end of this 20014-2015 school year.