

**John Wash Elementary School
Sanger Unified School District
Fresno, California**



TRANSCRIPT: “Professional Learning Communities Powered by Data”

ELIZABETH REYES-RAGSDALE, TEACHER AND PLC LEADER: In my past experience teaching, I worked in grade level teams but not as quite closely as I did when I came here to Sanger Unified, where we were expected to work in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Our district is very supportive of PLC meetings. We meet once a week, with our grade-level members, to go over assessments and how our students are doing. Every other week we have a minimum release day where we are given more time to meet within our PLC. Each PLC has one person who is considered the leader. That person is on the (school) leadership team. We have additional meetings and trainings that we go to.

This year we are focusing on our English learners in our PLCs. We go over specific questions about how our ELs did. Ahead of teaching, we can go over things that might be difficult for them so we can prepare them for the tests.

We have our CSP (Curriculum Support Provider) and our principal come in and help us through the process. They are present for a while each time we meet in PLCs to see what we are doing. And they point us in the right direction. With their help, we have changed what we do, and look at different data or look more in depth into it.

WESLEY SEVER, PRINCIPAL: When we examine data we really sit down with our teachers, by grade-level, and explain the specific data and what it means and how they can apply it to their classroom. When I first became a principal, I would give them all the data sheets I had. Some were getting confused; they didn’t understand...“Why are we getting this?” It was more work for them. And data shouldn’t be more work. Data should give us more of a focus in the classroom.

After that, I learned that as a principal, I needed to screen the data so we don’t get into this data overload. So that we are using the data that we need to make a difference in the classroom.

The power of data is that you are comparing. You are looking at what is happening in your classroom with particular students.

The issue that we had several years ago with data is that at each grade level, teachers were giving different assessments. And that is a problem, because on a day-today basis, teachers need to be communicating on the success of children, on whether their children were learning. And that’s important because we can focus our conversations on the learning of the students.

ELIZABETH REYES-RAGSDALE: When we participate in professional learning communities, we're expected to all come up with a common assessment and then administer it to everyone in the same grade level. Afterward, we look at the data and how each student performed, discuss any strengths or barriers for our students and decide if we need to re-teach that particular standard or if we can move on.

DONNA VINCENTI, CURRICULUM SUPPORT PROVIDER: We taught them how to look at assessments and see if they're working in the classrooms. We figured out that the publishers' assessments were not as rigorous as the CST (California State Test) was. So the teachers looked at the CST released test questions, looked at the language, looked to see how they were asking the questions, so they would develop tests that were rigorous enough.

ELIZABETH REYES-RAGSDALE: The most challenging part of moving to this data-based assessment was knowing that I was always going to be held accountable and my data was going to be out there for everyone to see.

DONNA VINCENTI: When they do bring the data to their PLCs and if my class did horrible and my partner's class, the two partners did wonderful, it's not an "I gotcha". It's me asking them, "What did you do?" I need to know what you did. I need your help. And that's part of the professional learning community also. If I just had a few that didn't do well, and my partner, all of her kids did really well, I would say, "Can you please teach my kids how you did it?" Because obviously the way I'm doing it isn't working.

ELIZABETH: Aside from looking at data and assessment, we are able to talk about our students and give each other ideas and help for their success in life, not just on tests.