

Aditi Professional Development Centre

Says Todd Whittakerⁱ, “The best thing about being a teacher is that it matters. The hardest thing about being a teacher is that it matters every day”.

This means that it is critical for practising teachers to have regular opportunities to learn from each other. The best professional development is ongoing, experiential, collaborative and connected to and derived from working with students and understanding their culture.

Richards and Farrellⁱⁱ provide a description of what is meant by professional development. They say that it refers to “general growth not focused on a specific job. It serves a long-term goal and seeks to facilitate growth of teachers’ understanding of teaching and of themselves as teachers.” This often involves examining different dimensions of a teacher’s practice as a basis for reflective review and can hence be perceived as not top down but from base up.

Aims of the Aditi PDC

- Create and support innovative initiatives (in teaching and learning) throughout the school. To ensure that spaces and opportunities are created for teachers, departments and sections to try new things, helping to celebrate such innovative impulses and help make them part of the culture of the school.
- Facilitate a wide range of opportunities for continuous professional development and provide regular support and follow-up.
- Help innovative faculty members become trainers through mentorship and coaching.
- Apply for external grants that may be available that support innovation and oversee their utilization.
- Meet regularly with heads of the various schools to ensure regular and meaningful reflection about where each school is headed in teaching and learning.
- Inspire and enable out-of-the box thinking for deliberately diverse groups of teachers and leaders.
- Facilitate meaningful audits, of teaching and learning, across the school and identify action points.
- Continue to assist with subject specific workshops conducted by Cambridge Assessment International Examinations.

The following have been the first set of processes

- Reviewing our own theories and principles of teaching
- Developing an understanding of different styles of teaching
- Collaborating in a team
- Using feedback effectively

- Understanding if there is ever a finish line for a teacher? – “Yet all experience is an arch where thro’/ Gleams that untravell’d world whose margin fades/ Forever and forever when I move.” (Alfred Lord Tennyson – Ulysses)

Teaching is a complex act. No list can capture the extraordinary subtlety involved. The late Madeline Hunterⁱⁱⁱ compared teaching to surgery, “Where you think fast on your feet and do the best you can with the information you have. You must be very skilled, very knowledgeable, and exquisitely well trained, because neither the teacher nor the surgeon can say, ‘Everybody sit still until I figure out what in the heck we’re gonna do next’”.

The teaching community must be the school’s biggest asset and we need to weave positive stories around us. “Teachers’ stories can save us,” writes Tim O’Brien in *The Things They Carried*. “I hang on tight to that idea, year after year. Not because these stories will save my students. But because I’m hoping my students will grow up and save the rest of us”.

ⁱ Authority on teacher leadership – University of Missouri

ⁱⁱ Professional Development for Language Teachers: Strategies for Teacher Learning - 2005

ⁱⁱⁱ Professor of Educational Administration and teacher education - UCLA