



Professional Development at Brooke

Great teaching can close the achievement gap, so we invest heavily in professional development at Brooke. Our teachers are committed to continually improving their craft and believe whole heartedly in the organizational value, “We Grow Best Together.”

Teacher Observation and Evaluation

One of the fastest, most effective ways to help teachers improve is by providing them with consistent, clear feedback on what they are doing well and what they can do better. Brooke teachers are observed at least 20 times per year. When observing, school leaders typically spend 15 to 30 minutes honing in on one aspect of the lesson related to instruction or classroom management. Instructional leader-teacher debriefs generally occur within 48 hours of an observation and are structured to focus on one or two specific goals for improvement. Debriefs occur so frequently that instructional leaders and teachers get to know and trust each other, paving the way for open, honest conversations that lead to incredible professional growth. Every January, teachers meet with an instructional leader for a formalized, standards-based performance review. Mid-year conversations are generally just that – conversations that focus on goals with which teachers and leaders are already quite familiar. During mid-year reviews, teachers are also invited to reflect on their own short and long term professional goals, information that leaders can use to further personalize and strengthen the coaching relationship.

Campus-Based Professional Development

Professional development sessions take all shapes and forms and the topics differ from campus to campus. One day a week, the school day starts late (Brooke High School and 8GA) or ends early (K-7 schools) so teachers can participate in professional development. Generally, school leaders lead a 45-minute all-staff session focused on an element of school or classroom culture. Examples of recent culture sessions include trainings on showing care for students, increasing student engagement, cultivating strong student teamwork, and improving students’ non-cognitive skills. Following whole group sessions, teachers typically split into grade level or content teams. Teams may look at curriculum plans, grade and norm student work, analyze data or watch a video of a lesson and discuss elements of effective instruction. The goal for professional development is to provide teachers with several concrete ideas for how to immediately improve both their planning and instructional skills.

Video analysis is a common thread that runs throughout every aspect of PD. At the beginning of the year, norms are set around how to have positive, productive and constructive conversations about the lessons. Then, throughout the school year, many videos are viewed and analyzed for elements of effective instruction. No teacher has ever taught a perfect lesson, but we know we can always get better if we take the time to deconstruct the exact elements that make a lesson strong.

School-based professional development is not just limited to one day a week. Grade level or content teams meet with each other daily to co-plan, and at least once per week they meet with instructional leaders to examine data, discuss content, plan lessons, or evaluate student work. Overall, teachers and leaders spend an immense amount of time thinking about and reflecting upon instruction.



Network Professional Development & Co-Planning

We strive to create a culture in which everyone across the network feels connected to Brooke's mission of closing the achievement gap. Our organizational values provide a helpful framework for fostering this identity and our staff works hard to maintain consistent cross-campus collaboration, but it is important to give teachers time to meet in person several times each year to engage in network professional development and mission affirmation. Network professional development provides everyone at Brooke with the opportunity to come together, reflect and set new goals. The time serves as a reminder that our mission is urgent, that great teaching closes the achievement gap, that we all have the potential to be strong leaders, and that we always grow best when we grow together.

There are at least 3 opportunities throughout the year for the network to come together. On August 1st, network co-directors Kimberly Steadman and Jon Clark always kick off the beginning of the school year with a workshop designed to reinforce Brooke's mission and values. There are two other network professional development days, in the fall and the spring. The structure of these days varies; teachers might visit other high performing schools in the area, participate in co-planning time or instructional professional development. During these days there is also the opportunity for the entire network to come together to hear from the Co-Directors on network wide-goals and initiatives. In 2018, Brooke launched Network Wide Observation Days, where each teacher in the network is assigned a specific day to visit another Brooke school to learn best practices.