

“Engaging Teachers in Change” webinar **Q & A with Sue Abplanalp and Jo Seidel**

These questions were sent in by participants in advance of the webinar. Here are Sue and Jo’s responses:

If incentive pay funds had been available, how might you have used them to recognize and reward teachers?

- Offer time to plan
- Embrace teacher leadership & knowledge
- Embed professional development (PD) on-site
- Offer credit/merit for all PD
- Give teachers a choice in type of PD
- Provide food for PD opportunities!
- Promote team teaching to ease case loads

Can you articulate your "larger vision," i.e. what's best for kids?

We (Jo and Sue) stress the importance of focusing on improving learning for all kids, not just the “bubble kids” or the students who are struggling most. “All” means all. The targets with zones on S.M.A.R.T. goal trees really help emphasize that.

Also, trust is a huge factor in school improvement, as much for the kids as for teachers and parents. Everyone every day is earning trust through their actions and behaviors. We have to pay attention not only to what students are learning but their learning environment. To what degree do they feel safe, supported, appreciated?

On a strategic level, as an example of what I (Sue) feel is best for kids, right now in Madison we’re creating 4 dual language elementary schools where “ELL” and non-ELL kids will be learning both Spanish and English. We strongly believe that all our kids will need to be fluent in both Spanish and English in our country’s newly forming dual-language culture.

How do you keep bringing your staff back to the focus of what we have control over? (*The natural tendency to "rationalize" away data we don't like is pretty powerful.*)

Sometimes you have to simply insist that people try the process, try using the tools, in order to see results. When teachers see the effects of using this process, their beliefs about what is possible change.

What are examples of professional learning that principals have used to increase teacher quality?

The most powerful professional development I (Sue) found was peer coaching, a “teachers-helping-teachers” approach. As I presented in the webinar, however, not all teachers were ready to go there right away, so I built in a variety of methods for teachers to learn: videos, workshops, study circles, etc. You can see more examples of what we did—and their impact--on page 32 of the slides.

How does one get teachers to embrace change?

I (Sue) based my approach on Mary Lippett's model: for change to happen one must have vision, skills, incentives, resources, and action plans. You can read the full story in my book, *Breaking the Low Achieving Mindset!*

Do you bring nay-sayers along or leave them alone?

I (Sue) honestly thought the veteran teachers would be the toughest, but actually they wound up being the biggest supporters. The reason was that they had so much to share! Given the opportunity to demonstrate their expertise (which I'd documented via "friendly observer" walkthroughs), they jumped at the chance to work with other teachers. For those who still clung to the old ways (i.e. lots of teacher-talk, whole group lessons, etc.), I spent time observing in their classrooms and coaching them. It made a big difference to everyone that I was a participant learner. I didn't just "send people to training;" I attended literacy sessions as well. More than anything, that may have helped turn the tide.

At the end of my book, I discuss 9 essential components of an effective leader. I hope you'll find these helpful in answering this particular question.