Overview of
Elementary Teachers Excited About Math (E-TEAM)
Professional Development

E-TEAM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AN OVERVIEW
2001-2005

Abstract

This report is an overview of the E-Team project at the fifty four elementary Title I schools. One teacher from each Title I school was selected to be a part of this mathematics study group. Teachers gathered, in two separate groups, five times during the school year for a full day of networking, learning about the newest research in math, exploring ways to integrate brain research with math, and getting new ideas to use with students. The E-Team members were then expected to take what they learned, use it in their classrooms, and share it with the other teachers at their respective schools. This project presented teachers with a unique staff development strategy and opportunity which instilled confidence and developed skills in the participating teachers. However, the program was discontinued after the 2004-05 school year as a result of the district launching an embedded staff development model in all elementary schools.

Implementation

E-Team (Elementary Teachers Excited About Math) began in the fall of 2001 to develop leaders at the school who could model and facilitate best practices in mathematics for elementary teachers. Fifty four teachers, one from each Title I school, were selected to be a part of this mathematics study group. Some teachers volunteered to participate while others were chosen by their principal. Teachers gathered, in two separate groups, five times during the school year for a full day of networking, learning about the newest research in math, exploring ways to integrate brain research with math, and getting new ideas to use with students. The E-Team members were then expected to take what they learned, use it in their classrooms, and share it with the other teachers at their respective schools.

Beginning in the second year, teachers were divided into two groups based on experience in E-Team: veteran or new teachers. Teachers were only allowed to participate for two years before they had to allow another teacher at their school to have an opportunity to participate.

The meetings were led by the Title I math trainers and included a wide variety of topics and activities. Participants read math-related articles, learned math games to play with their students, joined study groups, learned about manipulatives, brainstormed about a variety of math topics and problems, explored the math-literature connection, and kept journals of their experiences. For homework, they were given the tasks of trying the activities and ideas they learned and sharing them with the other teachers back at their schools. At the next E-Team meeting, they then reported the progress at their school to the rest of the participants.

Effects of the E-Team project

Participants' feedback:
Teacher survey
In 2003-04, to assess the professional growth of the participants and the productivity of the trainings, the E-Team teachers responded to a survey. The results revealed:

- Ninety-eight percent of the participants reported that E-Team had positively impacted their development as math teachers.
- Ninety-six percent said they feel comfortable teaching math as a result of being a member of E-Team.

- One hundred percent of participants said that the activities were practical and/or adaptable, they felt comfortable sharing, the trainer interactions made for a positive learning environment and that if given the choice, they would return to E-Team.
- However, only seventy-nine percent reported having opportunities to share information with their staff.

The results of the survey are presented in attachment A.

Focus group
At the same time, the E-Team participants also participated in focus group discussions to further incite opinions about the project. The results of the focus groups revealed:

- Participants thought the project was very valuable – providing new insights, enthusiasm, and support.
- Some schools have the E-Team member share on a regular basis, but others just share on a personal basis.
- Participants wanted to see principals more involved in the project – especially in terms of making sharing a priority.
- Trainings were a good mix of topics and personalities, with extremely effective presenters.
- Participants noted a huge jump in math strands as a result of E-Team training in comparison to colleagues' scores.
- Veteran participants wanted to be able to continue participation despite the two-year limit.

The results of the focus group can be found in attachments B and C.

With the exception of a couple of logistical suggestions and frustrations with not having opportunities to share with staff, all of the comments in the focus group were positive and complimentary. Teachers praised the experience, loved the presentations, ideas, and all that they learned, and wished they could continue with it (past the two year limit). Some commented that it was one of the best training experiences they had ever had. Others said it energized them, gave them confidence, and challenged them mathematically.

Conclusions

E-Team appears to have been a much appreciated method of professional development. It presented teachers with a unique staff development strategy and opportunity which instilled confidence and developed skills in the participating teachers. However, the program was discontinued after the 2004-05 school year as a result of the district launching an embedded staff development model in all elementary schools. This new model employs the same strategies as E-Team did, but involves many more teachers, on a more frequent basis, and in the classroom setting. As a result of the discontinuation of E-Team, its effectiveness as a professional development practice is no longer being investigated.

Recommendation

The new embedded staff development model has been launched in all elementary schools in the district. In order to ensure maximum effectiveness, this new model should be evaluated annually to assess its implementation and effectiveness.

E-Team Survey-April 2004 Veteran and New Teachers	Number of Respondents	Percentage of "Agree" and "Strongly Agree"
I. Professional Growth		
1. E-Team has had a positive impact on my development as a mathematics teacher.	48	98%
2. I am comfortable teaching mathematics, as the result of being a member of E-Team.	48	96%
3. I often have opportunities to share information with my staff.	48	79%
4. I often have opportunities to interact with my E-Team peers.	48	90%
5. The responses I have received from my E-Team journal entries have been helpful.	48	100%
6. I feel my opinions were valued.	48	100%
II. Training		
7. The activities presented in E-Team were practical and/or adaptable.	48	100%
8. The literature selections were useful in my classroom.	48	98%
9. The information provided from the professional articles was pertinent.	48	94%
10. Overall, the pacing of the E-Team training was good.	48	98%
11. I was comfortable sharing at E-Team.	48	100%
12. The activities and ideas presented at E-Team were timely.	48	98%
13. There was sufficient time made for the discussion of activities and ideas.	48	100%
14. There was good variety in the materials and activities presented.	48	100%
15. The time allotted for E-Team training (one full day) was adequate.	47	96%
16. The trainer interactions made for a positive learning environment.	48	100%
17. There was sufficient time for professional development.	48	98%
18. I was satisfied with the amount of materials given out at E-Team.	48	98%
19. If I were given the choice, I would return to E-Team.	48	100%

Focus Group Feedback
First-Year E-Team Participants
April 19, 2004

Professional growth
- ⌘ Very valuable!
- ⌘ Suggestions:
    - o *[Need more]* administration buy-in
    - o *[Separate]* packets by grade level
    - o Can share E-Team items at faculty meetings
    - o E-Team workshop for staff
    - o Sharing by others (students) with others (students)
    - o Sharing with other teachers from other schools

Training
- ⌘ *[We have had a]* huge jump in math strands as a result of E-Team training in comparison to colleagues scores.
- ⌘ *Suggestions:*
    - o Strategies for sharing at schools
    - o Separation of K-2 and 3-5 math information – two different sessions for the same group
    - o Principals to be a part and made aware of what E-Team is about! How it fits with math expectations

Not covered on the survey
- ⌘ Presenters extremely effective
- ⌘ Opportunities to play games was highly effective
- ⌘ Teacher friendly materials *[that don't require]* a lot of supplies and materials
- ⌘ Easy for a family involvement
- ⌘ Materials met FCAT expectations
- ⌘ Strong connections between games and curriculum

Future of E-Team! [comments not really E-Team issues]
- ⌘ Key math teachers?
    - o Time – coach and teacher?
- ⌘ Math Coach
    - o Remove ESP teachers
    - o Teacher input to math coach
    - o ESP will be gone in time
    - o Schools need ESP – should not be a trade off!
    - o Where are these decisions coming from?
    - o AYP in math scores

Focus Group Feedback
Second-Year E-Team Participants
April 15, 2004

Professional growth
- ⌘ Activities stretched us at times *[good]*
- ⌘ Understand theory behind concepts
- ⌘ Can relate to those students who struggle
- ⌘ Great to be with math
- ⌘ People who are enthusiastic about math
- ⌘ Good sharing of ideas
- ⌘ Help in solving issues
- ⌘ Engaged and learning
- ⌘ Offers teachers at school support
- ⌘ Example of PLC that's working
- ⌘ Great articles!
- ⌘ Sharing
    - o On agenda at some schools
    - o Others-personal sharing only
    - o Not an expectation of many principals-should be!
    - o Some members offer sharing in own room (not mandatory)
    - o Covered at curriculum meeting
    - o Time to study them

Training comments/suggestions
- ⌘ Keep up work
- ⌘ Strand by strand was good rather than mixing strands. Nice mix of personalities
- ⌘ *[Trainers are]* knowledgeable
- ⌘ *[Environment is]* non-threatening
- ⌘ Good resources
- ⌘ 1 day/1 month okay
- ⌘ Scheduling i.e. before Christmas, FCAT April for 3rd grade

Not covered on survey
- ⌘ Why can't we continue as E-Team?
    - • We already know the "system" and are ready to move forward
    - • Especially if no one *[else]* wants to come
    - • Most of us would like to …even if different model
    - • To continue connection maybe something like Algebra Network
- ⌘ Is there a specific process for deciding who is selected to attend E-Team?
- ⌘ Should E-Team rep be math rep (lead math teacher next year)?
- ⌘ Need better communication between Administration building, school administrator and teachers.
- ⌘ Not all schools (teachers) receive same info i.e.; not every one knows about lead math/reading teacher, math coach, etc.