



The Missouri Staff Development Council



Outstanding Professional Learning Team Award Application

(PDC, grade level team, content/department, or any district-wide or building level team focused on effective instructional practice, or building level team focused on instructional or improvement)

Recognizing that High Quality Professional Development requires meeting the standards, MSDC will present Learning team awards to those teams within a building or across the district that excel in all criteria established for the award as outlined on the rubric.

Any MSDC member may nominate or self-nominate a program/initiative for the award. The MSDC newsletter will call for nominations in the fall issue. All nominees will be recognized and the winner(s) announced at the Show Me Professional Development Conference. The winner shall receive an award at the Show Me Professional Development Conference, as well as a letter of recognition to the recipient's superintendent/supervisor. This award may or may not be presented every year. The Awards Committee shall consist of representatives from the MSDC board.

Name of program/initiative _____ District Grade Level Vertical Team _____

Name of School _____ Raymore-Peculiar School District _____

Principals' names: Lovie Driskill, Michelle Hoffmann, Rob Weida, Jerrod Fellhauer, Kelly Vines, Lisa Hatfield, Al Voelker, Doug Becker, David Mitchell, Sherri Miller, and Steven Miller

Principal's address: 21005 S. School Road, Peculiar, MO 64078

School District _____ Raymore-Peculiar School District

Superintendent/Supervisor name _____ Dr. Kevin Daniel _____

Superintendent/Supervisor name address _____ 21005 S. School Road, Peculiar, MO 64078 _____

Name of person submitting nomination _____ Karen Hurst _____

Address _____ 21005 S. School Road, Peculiar, MO 64078 _____

Email address _____ khurst@raypec.k12.mo.us _____

Phone number _____ 816-892-1346 _____

Current position _____ Director of Curriculum and Assessment _____

School/district/ agency/institution: Instruction and Student Achievement Dept., Raymore-Peculiar School District

RPDC Region _____ 9 and 3 _____

MSDC Representative _____ Julie Blaine and Linda Kostner (Tom Robb and Linda Shippy) _____

Along with the application form, complete a narrative that describes the qualifications based on the rubric found on the website. The narrative can be only 3 pages maximum in 12 point font. The application form and narrative must be postmarked or emailed no later than January 31, 2010 to MSDC Awards Committee, Deb Wycuff, 23913 Lawrence 2170, Marionville, MO 65705 or dwyucuff@monett.k12.mo.us

If you have any questions please contact dwyucuff@monett.k12.mo.us

The Raymore-Peculiar District has worked for the last seven years to become an effective Professional Learning Community. An example of such work is the dedication and professionalism of the district Grade Level Vertical Team.

The Grade Level Vertical Team is made up of approximately 100 teacher leaders from Kindergarten through Twelfth grade. The members were chosen by their building principals because of their dedication to children and for their growth mindset that each student will and can be successful.

The group began their work in the Fall of 2009. They came together with principal leadership to begin the specific work of developing essential understandings. The Raymore-Peculiar District Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP) designates that K-12 Essential Understandings will be developed in Math, Communication Arts, Science, and Social Studies by June 2011.

Essential Understandings are defined by Ray-Pec as the conceptual knowledge that is transferrable to other content and experiences. Why essential understandings? Because there are more standards and benchmarks than there is time. So what do we decide to teach? How do we decide how long to spend on a topic or concept? We want students to learn more than basic skills and concepts. Our goal is to increase the rigor and depth of knowledge so that students leave Ray-Pec as thinkers and problem solvers. Leave knowing essential understandings!

This learning team began by developing a common understanding of what the work meant and where we have been. The team has met monthly throughout the school year and extended their work by collaboratively continuing the process through the summer. Now in their second year of intensive work, the team has worked through a process that has used their collective knowledge and expertise, while utilizing their leadership qualities to encompass their peers within their grade level and departments.

The process has moved from developing a vertical look at the big ideas that students should leave each grade mastering. The team was configured into a K-12 vertical group for each of the four core areas; Math, Communication Arts, Science and Social Studies.

The big ideas led to the work of looking into the grade level expectations at K-6 and the course level expectations at 7-12. The work extended into unwrapping the standards so that a deeper understanding was developed by all. This was new learning and included practice, as well as conversation, to incorporate the steps of peeling away the dos and knows of the standards. This work was completed month-by-month with team members going back to their buildings and leading collaborative efforts with their colleagues.

Simultaneously, the team began learning what an effective essential understanding sounds like and the characteristics to look for when developing one. Again, new learning with much practice, together, was embedded into the collaborative inquiry of the work. The team practiced writing essential understandings by analyzing the expectations of the content. Essential understanding drafts were then peer edited for strengths and weaknesses. The team also used colleague input and expertise to rewrite and develop the

essential understandings.

Each layer of development utilized constant conversation and professional judgment throughout the process. All staff was given an opportunity to critique the essential understandings by evaluating each one using a list of characteristics that represent a strong and effective essential understanding. Once the two groups; K-6 and 7-12 developed agreed-upon drafts, they came together to join their essential understandings into one set, K-12, for each of the four content areas.

This work has taken 16 months to date. The team is now beginning to align the grade level or course level expectations with the essential understandings. Power standards will be developed by reviewing performance data, anecdotal teacher notes, State standards and Common Core State Standards.

The work of this team will lead to a backward design development of the curriculum, assessments and instructional response, by starting with the end in mind - the essential understandings that we want students to know when they leave our district. Teamwork will develop a consistent classroom experience that is rigorous, engaging and explicit.

The team of 100 has come together with the leadership of all building principals within our district. There have been many hours of labor and toil to accomplish this goal! They have struggled through tough issues, spent grueling hours digging into the complicated topics, yet coming out with energy to continue and never giving up. The team has learned together and from each other. It is amazing to see a group of individuals become a dynamic team that is focused and determined to contribute to the future success of the Ray-Pec students!

This team is very worthy of the title of “Outstanding Professional Learning Team.” With great pleasure I recommend this Professional Learning Community of educators!

Karen Hurst
Director of Curriculum and Assessment
Raymore-Peculiar School District
khurst@raypec.k12.mo.us
816-892-1346