

News Release

Dobbs Ferry School District Hosts First Tri-State Consortium Visit to Examine Technology Integration

Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. March 9, 2017—This past week the Dobbs Ferry School District hosted a visiting team of teachers and administrators from districts throughout the NY Metropolitan area as part of the School District’s association with the Tri-State Consortium of Schools. Dobbs Ferry has been a member of the Consortium since 2012, and this is the first assessment visit for the District, which is by request only. The Consortium team spent three days on campus and provided the District with invaluable feedback regarding its efforts to successfully integrate technology into the classrooms.

The Consortium’s assessment team, referred to as “critical friends,” is made up of trained educators and colleagues from within the Consortium membership who evaluate and report on pre-determined programs or areas selected by the districts themselves. According to Dobbs Ferry Superintendent Dr. Lisa Brady, who is also on the Tri-State Consortium Steering Committee, this process provides a unique professional development experience utilizing real people, real issues and real schools to help a school system move to the next level of work. Underlying this model is the belief that high-performing districts can and must improve continually.

“The Consortium team spent three days interviewing teachers and students and visiting classrooms in each of the three schools,” said Douglas Berry, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction for the Dobbs Ferry School District. “We asked the team to explore how our use of technology enhances teaching and learning and supports the development of skills in our students that will prepare them for the future. More specifically, we wanted the visiting team to provide comments in response to the following questions:

Essential Questions:

1. To what extent has the integration of technology been successful in supporting the development of Tony Wagner’s 21st Century skills in pursuit of the District vision of *Independent Thinkers Prepared to Change the World?*

- Critical Thinking
- Communication
- Adaptability
- Initiative
- Creativity and Imagination
- Collaboration
- Analysis

2. To what extent has the integration of technology helped the District to further reach its goal of enhancing teaching and learning in order to maximize the potential of all students?

Preparing for a consultancy visit is a major undertaking as the building leadership teams and staff spent weeks identifying and collecting “evidence and artifacts” that the District wanted to share. The Dobbs Ferry School District was able to go “paperless,” by building a special website for the visiting team to review documents, videos, calendars, survey data, strategic plan, 3-year technology plan, budget information, etc. for easy online access.

“Over the last several years our staff has worked very hard to grow our use of technology as a teaching and learning tool, and the progress we have made has been substantial,” Mr. Berry said. “The Tri-State visit was a chance to acknowledge and celebrate that work. It was a wonderful professional development opportunity to present efforts we have made to an objective group of educators, and get feedback about what we are doing well and receive recommendations about what our next steps may be. As we work as a District in the months ahead to update and revise our strategic plan, this feedback will be even more timely and important.”

The visit concluded with the Consortium's consultancy protocol during which time the District provides clarification regarding questions that may linger for the team, and begins to receive some informal feedback in a “fishbowl like” setting. The team spends time developing responses to the “essential questions” posed by the District, and an evaluation report includes commendations of the District’s strengths and recommendations to suggest next steps for growth. Two years after the external peer review visit, a representative subset of the visiting team returns and facilitates a conversation focused on the actions taken by the District in response to the team’s original recommendations.

Superintendent Brady, Mr. Berry and numerous Dobbs Ferry teachers have all been trained as “critical friends” and have served on visiting teams evaluating other districts’ disciplines. The Dobbs Ferry School District chose to look at technology integration for their first visit because it encompasses K-12 and permeates every level of the District. It also gets everyone thinking about their work as opposed to a selected group in one content area or grade level.

According to the Consortium team’s findings, the importance of having an emerging technologies coach work with teachers to give them the skills they need to implement technology effectively into their classrooms, is a crucial step in supporting teaching and learning. Meshing curriculum with technology to develop 21st century skills maximizes the potential of all students. Technology enhances student learning by enabling collaboration, communication, access to research, raising the level of class discussion and critical thinking, involving students more deeply in their own education, inspiring creativity and teaching students how to effectively use technologies in the real world and throughout their careers as they become *Independent Thinkers Prepared to Change the World*.

Click <https://ensemble.lhric.org/Watch/TriStateVisit> to see DFTV’s District Dialogue Show on the Tri-State Consortium. Dr. Brady talks with Tri-State Consortium Executive Director Marty Brooks and DFSD Assistant Superintendent Doug Berry.

###

For more information, please contact:

Public Information Officer, Elizabeth Hausman (914) 693-1500 x3013