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CASE STUDY

PD IN FOCUS[®]

IN 2010, I.S. 73—THE FRANK SANSIVIERI INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL IN QUEENS, N.Y., ADDED ASCD'S PD IN FOCUS SOLUTION TO ITS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM. THE SOLUTION IS A WEB-BASED STREAMING MEDIA APPLICATION THAT PROVIDES USERS WITH ON-DEMAND ACCESS TO HUNDREDS OF HOURS OF ASCD'S AWARD-WINNING VIDEO CONTENT AND RELATED READINGS AND ACTIVITIES.

Several months after the adoption, ASCD spoke with the school's teachers and administrators to see how the implementation was going, what their experiences with the solution were like, and—most importantly—how it was affecting their school. The information provided below comes from these interviews.

CASE STUDY

Located in the heart of Queens, N.Y., I.S. 73 is a large urban middle school serving over 1,600 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. Over two-thirds of its student body qualifies for free or reduced lunch. The school has approximately 100 full-time teachers, the majority of whom have between 4 and 10 years' experience¹.

Patricia Reynolds, I.S. 73's principal, and her fellow administrators wanted to enhance their school's professional development (PD). In looking for a PD program, they focused on tools that not only addressed the latest education theory and pedagogy, but also helped translate the research into something her teachers could actually put into practice. Reynolds recognized that ASCD's PD In Focus professional development tool did just that.



"It makes it real for teachers."

The PD In Focus solution's rich content library, flexibility, and user-friendly interface allowed Reynolds and her faculty and administrators to use the solution in many different ways. Often, an administrator or teacher leader would organize a small group of teachers with a common set of needs and, as a group, view relevant videos and resource material.

Assistant Principal Ellen Andriello, one of those leading the small groups, quickly understood PD In Focus's potential to translate research into action:

*"It was really great when we saw real examples that we could take right back to our classroom. **It makes it real for teachers.** Something they could visualize and watch. Seeing it embeds it a little more."*

With the content in place, the group could then focus more of its energy on working through how to put the PD material they just saw to work in their classrooms. For Reynolds, it was through this period of discussion and collaboration that her teachers authentically deepened their understanding.

"Wow! This is great."

As in all schools, the staff at I.S. 73 brings very diverse sets of needs and expectations to the PD sessions. Too often, whole-school PD fails to engage or address some attendees' needs—wrong grade level, wrong subject matter, or wrong set of problems. Even those



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who do find the PD material relevant often struggle to connect it to their specific classrooms.

For Assistant Principal Andriello, PD In Focus solved this issue, making relevant PD easier for her to create and more engaging to her staff:

*"PD over the past couple years has been a huge undertaking. Whenever we put a PD session together, we get really focused. We've learned that when we give PD, we have to be really clear [with teachers]. If we are really clear and we have a good tool for it, you are 50 percent there. We are learning every single day. When I saw PD In Focus, I was like, **Wow! This is great; [it] makes PD really differentiated for my staff.**"*

Staff members share her enthusiasm. When administrators asked science teacher Joseph Nemeth to try PD In Focus, his initial response was one of skepticism—wasn't it just another in a long line of 'new' approaches to PD? "My expectation was I wasn't sure," said Nemeth. "I was inherently cynical at first. Didn't see how it would help. **But PD In Focus did!**"

"It's helped me grow."

With hundreds of hours of classroom examples in its library, PD In Focus brings successful teaching practices conducted in relevant school settings to life—a benefit to teachers and administrators alike. In addition to using the solution with teachers, Assistant Principal Michael Casale finds PD In Focus useful for sharpening his own skills. And because it's an

anytime, anywhere web-based solution, Casale can turn to it when it fits in his often overbooked schedule:

"It's helped me grow as a supervisor. We want to stay current on strategies. At the end of the day when the staff is gone, I can turn on the video and see what's going on. How we compare to others."

"[It] makes a better connection for them than just my notes."

In addition to using PD In Focus in small groups and individually, users at I.S. 73 found the solution very effective at offering targeted help to individual teachers. Assistant Principal Andriello uses the tool to work with struggling teachers:

*"I guide them, but then I direct them so they can look at it on their own. I assign it. I say, 'check this out.' **That makes a better connection for them than just my notes.** I also use it in grade-level common planning. It's that connection—it makes it real for them."*

"Basically, you log on, and there it is."

The user-friendly interface and easy-to-use search feature means users can quickly get to the exact material they want. "PD In Focus is a great tool for us," Casale noted. "Basically, you log on, and there it is. We can bring it to common planning. Bring it to PD."

Users can access PD In Focus from school or home—if they have a computer with

an Internet connection, they have PD In Focus. They can even access it from their mobile and tablet devices, including iPhones, iPod Touches, iPads, and Android 2.2 mobile devices. Furthermore, there is no special software to install, expensive networking upgrades to buy, or special training to attend. As I.S. 73 discovered, users can start using it almost immediately.

CONCLUSION

With ASCD's PD In Focus solution, I.S. 73 had a new way to raise the bar for their school-level PD. And they aren't alone. Schools, districts, universities, and individuals around the world have discovered that PD In Focus's constant connection to on-demand video energizes staff members and brings instructional improvement strategies to life.

What can PD In Focus do for you?
Start your free trial today at
<http://pdinfo.focus.ascd.org> **and find out for yourself!**

¹ NYC School Report, 2010–2011. http://schools.nyc.gov/OA/SchoolReports/2010-11/Survey_2011_Q073.pdf

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