Effective Faculty Meetings

Principals are well aware of these strategies for creating an effective faculty meeting:

- Begin on time;
- Work from an agenda;
- Limit topics;
- Encourage staff input; and
- Respect ending times.

At Hawthorn Elementary School, we believe this is not enough. We strive to maximize the effectiveness of faculty meetings through a focus on professional development.

Tuesday mornings at Hawthorn are dedicated to meeting the professional needs of the school and staff. At least once a month, these meetings highlight the work of the school’s three collaborative teams, which include staff from all grade levels and departments. Collaborative teams are charged with reviewing data, developing plans to address areas of opportunity, and monitoring the effectiveness of these plans.

Making Every Minute Count
This is a huge undertaking for the amount of time available. To make the best use of limited time, the article “Sixty Minutes to a Solution” by Matt Redmond was shared with all faculty members. The article provided structure and strategies to ensure that every minute counts, all committee members are engaged, and accountability for results are embedded into the process. Minutes from each collaborative team are summarized on a single sheet for easy reference by the entire faculty.

The remaining Tuesday morning meetings are dedicated to ongoing professional development or situational professional development. But rather than labeling all of them as faculty meetings, we call them what they are: data review meetings, collaborative team meetings, book studies, or testing protocol training. This creates a sense of purpose and meaning for these meetings.

Planning Ahead
Our ongoing professional development is agreed upon, designed, and scheduled prior to the beginning of the school year. Last year, this included a review of *Strategies that Work* by Stephanie Harvey and *Classroom Instruction that Works* by Robert Marzano. Although these books were previously studied, the review allowed us to focus on how the ideas they present were being systemically implemented at Hawthorn.

A Flexible Approach
Some of our Tuesday morning meetings address situational professional development on “hot topics.” For example, Hawthorn Elementary and the Park Hill School District recently began exploring the concept of customer service, and we devoted one faculty meeting to a discussion of “Who are our customers?” When we decided to write a technology grant for the school, our situational professional development meeting centered on the effective use of technology to enhance learning. And when the tragic shootings occurred at an Amish school in Pennsylvania, the meeting focused on a review and practice of the school’s crisis response plan. The flexibility of these meetings allows Hawthorn to be responsive to the emerging needs of the school or its students.

Eliminating the Nuts and Bolts
Since our Tuesday morning meetings are reserved for professional growth, a weekly bulletin is sent electronically to all staff members every Friday to communicate nuts-and-bolts information. The bulletin includes a calendar of upcoming events, announcements, celebrations, and a message from the principal.

Hawthorn Elementary no longer wastes time with conventional faculty meetings. Devoting this time to collaborative team meetings, data review meetings, crisis response team meetings, book reviews, and a myriad of other topics has helped us to grow and develop as a team. We’ve learned to make each minute count.

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**BEST PRACTICES**