

Pathwise—A Professional Development Program

A number of teachers and administrators from ISD 709 spent three days together this August to have meaningful discussions around classroom observation and professional development.

Pathwise works with districts implementing Charlotte Danielson's model of teaching excellence. For many years we've used Danielson's domains in our staff review process. Even though those domains already exist in our district, there is still greater potential in becoming more familiar with those elements and what they look like in action.

During our three days with the Pathwise facilitators, we discussed some common traits we see in effective classrooms, and we had the opportunity to watch recorded lessons to apply some of the elements of Danielson's work. One of the touchstones of this program is objective and standard observable elements rather than judgment. It was really eye-opening to have discussion around observable traits and behaviors rather than simple judgments like, "Wow, that teacher is really good." As a group of teachers and administrators, teachers had an opportunity to gain insight into the perspective of administrators and administrators had the chance to hear from teachers on these topics. What came out was a sense of common vision on most elements.

This fall, the Quality Steering Committee, in a discussion between teachers and administrators, committed to use Pathwise as a way to look at excellence in our schools (on many levels, including but not exclusively with reference to classroom teachers). There is a lot of potential with this training, potential to have colleagues observe and work in each other's classrooms, to provide timely and meaningful feedback, and to create a system where all employees share a common view of proficiency and excellence.

Over the course of this year and into next year, additional information will come out about training in Danielson's domains and in the use of observation as a tool to hone skills and share ideas.

Schools throughout the nation (and many of our neighboring districts) are also looking at the tenets of Danielson's work as they continue to grow as professionals; as with those districts, we will continue our work with Danielson's framework.

You may find additional information from ETS's Pathwise program at: <http://www.ets.org/pathwise>