



Mini-Sessions

Drawing on the Strengths, Talents, and Passion of Your Teachers and Staff to Create "Life-Long Learners" in the Teaching Profession



**Gold Hill Elementary
Fort Mill, South Carolina**

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School Facts

- Elementary K-5
- 825 Students
- Fort Mill, South Carolina (10 miles south of Charlotte, North Carolina)
- Staff Characteristics:
 - 3 Administrators
 - 67 certified teachers (50% have advanced degrees and 10 teachers are National Board Certified)
 - 15 support staff and one full-time nurse
- Assessment
 - Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT)

Educational Problems Addressed



DIFFERENTIATION
COLLABORATION
LIFE-LONG LEARNERS



What are Mini-Sessions?

- Teacher-centered professional development opportunities that....
 - Model differentiated instruction
 - Provide a choice of workshops conducted by “in-house experts”
 - Are offered periodically during our established faculty meeting times, on workdays, and after school



Sample Mini-Session Menu

- Select two sessions to attend. Each session will be 20 minutes long and will repeat.
- Session #1 - 2:45-3:05pm
- Session #2 - 3:10-3:30pm
- Presenters, topics, and room numbers are listed below.
- Julie Wells, Room B103 – Math Learning Stations to Help Differentiate Instruction
- Jason Layman - Room B107 – Icebreakers, Energizers, & Team Building Activities
- Jane Hooper, Faculty Meeting Room D115 – Analyzing Running Records
- Beth Burns, Room B101 – Flashlight Reading
- Kasey Kolste, Joy Price , Room D109 – Cooperative Learning Strategies
- JoNelle Gardner, Computer Lab, Room A218 – When to Wiki, When to Blog

Examples of Mini-Session topics

- ✓ Developing a Parent Handbook
- ✓ Setting Up a Class Behavior Management System
- ✓ Creating Class Newsletters That Keep Parents Informed
- ✓ Conducting Successful Class Meetings
- Creating Study Guides: A Tool for Developing Good Study Habits
- Using Kid Pix to Meet South Carolina Science Standards
- Smart Board Tips
- Setting Up Work Stations and Centers in the Classroom
- Using Art Prints as Writing Prompts
- Homeworkopoly and Other Ideas to Celebrate Success
- Organizing and Managing a Data Notebook
- Student-Led Conferences
- Basic First Aid – Safety, Gloves, Phoning for help, Finding problem



Who are presenters?

- Over 40% of our faculty and staff have presented mini-sessions to date
- Presenters include classroom teachers, administrators, the school nurse, media specialist, speech teacher, guidance counselor, special area teachers, community stakeholders
- Some eagerly volunteer
- Others are asked by administrators or suggested by colleagues to share



What are some of the benefits of Mini-Sessions?

- “In-house experts”
- Presenters develop leadership skills and gain more in-depth knowledge of their presentation topic
- New teachers get additional support as they begin their careers
- New and veteran teachers work and learn side-by-side
- Teachers model “life-long learning”
- Teachers learn successful strategies
- Students benefit from teachers sharing successful classroom practices, resources, and information



Tips for Success with Mini-Sessions

- Look for ways to support implementation of school-wide initiatives
- Identify areas for improvement
- Be a “talent scout”
- Offer a variety of topics
- Give careful thought to each session title
- Determine the appropriate number of Mini-Sessions to offer in each menu
- Consider the appropriate frequency of offering Mini-Sessions during a school year
- Use a sign-in sheet for each session



What do teachers say about mini-sessions?

- Uses staff development time wisely
- Provides choice
- Get practical ideas they can take back and use in the classroom
- Appreciate the opportunity to share with each other
- Helps them stay current in their field
- Provides tips and examples for implementation of educational initiatives
- Builds collegiality and promotes collaboration



What resources and tools are necessary?



**A Vision
Presenters
Participants
Time
Resources**



Summary Points

Key Learnings

- Mini-Sessions.....
 - differentiate professional development
 - encourage professional collaboration & collegiality
 - offer information on a variety of professional topics
 - develop leadership and presentation skills

Challenges still Ahead

- How can we.....
 - expand the ways that we differentiate staff development?
 - continue to encourage teachers to share strategies that benefit students.