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

Terry Brewer, Principal
Joy Price, Library Media Specialist
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.