

## **THE POWER OF FOCUS**

What research proves as best practice for teaching and learning is nothing new. In fact, the most effective actions we make towards maximizing learning for ALL students are well-known practices:

1. Guarantee the curriculum
2. Effective unit design
3. College & Career Ready (Authentic Literacy - critical reading of varying text perspectives, daily writing, and group collaboration)

Teachers have known and studied these three practices for years, but what separates great schools that develop students with highest achievement levels from all other schools is *focus*. Every teacher and leader is relentless in their pursuit of the priorities. “We must relentlessly exercise the discipline to say, ‘No thank you’ to initiatives that fail the hedgehog test” (Collins, 2005).



### Hedgehog Test

In the book *Good to Great* (2001), Collins reveres hedgehogs. Hedgehogs do one thing *great* (roll into a ball and protect themselves). Foxes, however, plan and plot and scheme as they “pursue many ends at the same time.” Foxes are scattered and confused, moving on many levels towards different means. That’s why they fail. By contrast, hedgehogs, with their single focus, succeed because they commit entirely and exclusively to what is essential and ignore the rest (Schmoker, 2011).

It is nearly impossible to master or implement what is most important for students if we pursue multiple new initiatives *before* we implement the highest priority – the three goals, our work this year.

## **2011-12 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS**

PD Days 1-2: August 22-23, 2011  
PD Day 3: November 8, 2011  
PD Day 4: February 17, 2012  
PD Day 5: April 5, 2012

Guaranteeing the curriculum takes time and should be guided by discussions between grade level teams. Additional professional development days are set aside first semester to complete District Goal 1 for content areas under revision this year:

- English-Language Arts (K-12)
- Math (K-2, 8-12)
- Social Studies (K-12)

## **PLC's**

Professional Learning Communities are the job-embedded system for solving issues related to teaching/learning. Content area PLCs will want to schedule adequate time needed to achieve District Goals 2- 3: *ensure all students access effective teaching*. Having already designed a unit's *Desired Results*, the work of PLC's is to guarantee:

- *Assessments* - frequent checks *for* learning throughout lessons and responsive teaching (intervention AND enrichment)
- *College/Career Ready* - critical reading, daily authentic writing, collaborating

*If you would like good ideas shared or priorities on teaching & learning clarified– please email:*  
[malcheskyb@perry-lake.k12.oh.us](mailto:malcheskyb@perry-lake.k12.oh.us)