

Keeping the Spark Alive: Alexandria City Public Schools' Journey to Implement OCDE Project GLAD® Districtwide

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Promising practices...

Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) is a small district in Virginia outside of Washington DC. We have a high EL population across the district and a dual language program in which I was teaching when, in 2013, a group of us went to La Cosecha.

We had heard of this conference in New Mexico and couldn't believe we were finally able to go. A preconference school visit to East San José Elementary School changed my life! There I saw teachers with interactive charts they had made and students, just like ours back in Virginia, who could actually use the vocabulary from the charts. The kids were singing and chanting grade-level content! It's not that what we saw was so different from what we were already doing, but it was so much more intentional and more visual.

We had to know more

That day we were introduced to OCDE Project GLAD®. My co-teacher and I went to every Project GLAD® session at La Cosecha and came back to Virginia begging to get trained. That summer our principal and DL coordinator found enough money to send us to be Tier 1 trained, with the promise that we would open our classrooms to be models for this new approach. We knew we were going to have to come back ready to put all we had learned into practice.

That school year we invited anyone and everyone to see GLAD® in action. We were encouraged to experiment and use GLAD® strategies where we could. The more we incorporated the strategies, the more our teammates wanted us to show them. We had never seen our students so engaged. They were using the language of instruction, showing growth on tests, and demonstrating a deeper understanding of content.

In the 2 years that followed, two cohorts of teachers from our DL program were trained by DLeNM, which provides Project GLAD® trainings under the direction of the OCDE Project GLAD® National Training Center. Everybody was curious and we were huge advocates for the model. "Come in! Just give it a try!" was our rallying cry. That year, an opportunity came to revamp our summer school curriculum, so I used it as our GLAD® playground. We wrote the summer

school curriculum as mini-GLAD® units and the teachers were all interested in this way of instructing. "This reminds me why I got into teaching in the first place!" one said. "Can I get trained next?" another teacher asked. We started with eager teachers who showed interest, then we began to systematically train grade-level teams as time progressed. We realized we wanted everyone in the DL program trained.



Teachers plan and create materials during district-level professional days.

By the end of the second year, teacher interest was high,

students' scores were showing improvement, and when there was an opening for a coaching role, I became the Language Acquisition Specialist focusing on OCDE Project GLAD® strategies for the DL program. As a part of this new role, my training partner and I wrote a 3-year plan for rolling out Project GLAD® in our district. We were hopeful and optimistic.

We presented our plan to our dual language coordinator, the office of English language learners, and our principals. At the same time, more and more people were asking when they were going to be trained. The plan was in place. Now, as we look back on those goals, we realize that we hit every one—even expanding our scope beyond the DL program.

In my role as a coach focused on OCDE Project GLAD®, I have worked hard to get into teachers' classrooms and model. If you can show them how to use a strategy with their own kids, on their own turf,

—continued on page 5—

Soleado—Fall 2018





—continued from page 4—

it immediately makes the strategy feel doable. And doable is what we were after.

Our Keys to Success

Create a spark year. When starting out, select a few enthusiastic, capable teachers to get trained and try out GLAD® strategies in their classroom. Support them, show them off, give them what they need to be successful. Get school administrators trained so they can be on board. Have small whole-staff professional development opportunities so others can find out what the buzz is about.

Promote a risk-taking atmosphere. Teachers have to be trusted to make good educational decisions for their learners and to take risks. If they try a strategy and it doesn't go as planned, they can refine and get better. If they are reprimanded for not doing it perfectly the first time, they won't try again. I knew we were getting it right when I had a veteran teacher ask me to come in and observe her trying something new to see how she could improve next time.

Have programmatic goals. Write them down. Getting 3 years at a time on paper allows you to not only think about the immediate timeline items, but long-term planning for budgeting as well. Have principals and school leaders help create this plan. The 1-day Leadership Ensemble provides principals and other school and district leaders information on OCDE Project GLAD® and what it looks like in action. (Visit <http://www.ocde.us/NTCProjectGLAD/Pages/default.aspx> for more information.) Knowledgeable leadership is important to reach program goals.

Provide the resources so teachers can be successful. Teachers need markers, tape, chart paper, sentence strips, and pocket charts. They also need access to a laminator and a color printer. That's it. No investment in expensive technology, subscriptions, or textbooks.

Offer whole-staff professional development opportunities (even when the whole school hasn't been trained). Many of the Project GLAD® strategies can be chunked into a nice 30-45 minute PD session: engaging strategies to begin a unit, foster student engagement, manage classroom behavior, and/or support student discourse—and (my all-time favorite) the Sentence-Building strand. These are all small tastes of Project GLAD® that everyone can

access, and they provide a great review for those already trained. These minisessions help bridge the divide between the trained and the not trained so that people don't feel left out.

After the GLAD® demo, focus on the doable.

I have found that if teachers try a strategy and feel successful, they will try another. Many of our teachers walked out of the 4-day demo with a GLAD® hangover. How can I actually do all of THAT in my classroom? We have helped teachers set the expectations to return to the classroom and try something out. The expectation is NOT that teachers will go back and recreate the demo.

Set up a place to share resources. ACPS uses a Google Drive folder to collect and share strategies and lessons by grade level. While we encourage our teachers to use the existing units for ideas and chants, we often have to make our own materials. Three years into creating our GLAD® folder, we have our own Chant bank, grade-level folders with Picture File Cards, Observation Charts, scanned images of Input Charts, and Expert Texts. Now, when teachers get trained they have access to these resources and can build on what has been started.

Advocate! Have an elevator speech ready on the benefits of Project GLAD® so that when opportunities arise you can quickly and clearly explain what GLAD® is and why it works. When decision makers are talking about providing access, closing the achievement gap, incorporating language arts into the content areas, speak up!

Take opportunities when they are given. Is the district asking for help writing curriculum during the summer? “GLAD® up” the curriculum! New summer school opportunity? Incorporate GLAD strategies! You are asked to model for another teacher? Model a GLAD® lesson. Someone is leaving and they are redefining a new position? How about someone to support teachers in implementation of GLAD® strategies so teachers can be successful?

Lessons learned

Of course after some reflection, there have been many things we could have done differently or would have changed. Here are a few:

—continued on page 13—

—continued from page 5—

No one is held accountable until they are trained. This becomes an issue when you are training your whole school and some teachers haven't yet been trained. It's unfair for anyone to be evaluated or held accountable for using strategies if they haven't been through the 6-day training.

It's hard to be the only one trained on your team. We have moved to training at least three teachers per team (two grade-level teachers and an EL teacher or support teacher). If you are the lone voice of GLAD® on a grade-level team, tensions can rise.

Model, model, model, but then let go. If all you do is model without a plan for the teacher to take over, they might continue to ask you to model and never take ownership of the strategies. Set up systems so that they understand what to do after you leave.

Focus the follow up. If you want continued success with implementation, you must provide follow up. After different attempts, this is what worked for us:

1. Google survey the whole staff with miniworkshop choices (strategies to start a unit, the Expository Strand, writing from a Comparative Input chart ...)
2. For district-level professional days, give teachers planning time. Offer refreshers on certain strategies in the back of the room, but let teachers plan and create materials with like-content teachers.
3. For individual teachers, use an observation form for what you DO see, not what you don't.
4. Offer multiple ways to support: modeling, coteaching, coaching from the back of the room and offering suggestions on a white board, or teacher-selected focused observations.

Along with DLeNM, ACPS trained 100 teachers last year and now have over 220 teachers trained in five schools. We are planning four more trainings next year, incorporating a new school, and starting a cohort of trainers-in-training. This year I will support district-wide implementation of Project GLAD®. We are on our way to providing access to language and content for thousands of our most vulnerable students.

The Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) holds full license to Project GLAD®. DLeNM provides Project GLAD® trainings under the direction of the OCDE Project GLAD® National Training Center.

—continued from page 9—

PLC, but my colleagues reacted positively to our work together. Here are some of their comments:

- I loved the focus on academic vocabulary. I liked that we had a word of the week and all focused on the same word and how it was used in the different content areas. I enjoyed VISITAS™, seeing how others utilize academic language and seeing the students in other environments.
- Breaking down the VISITAS™ afterwards was helpful in seeing what we do as a whole and what we need to work on.
- I have been in many collaboration groups over the years ... and this year has been very productive. The VISITAS™ experience was a good learning opportunity. The protocol for debriefing after the visits was educational and made teachers (including me) think about our strategies and how to improve, whether we were new or veteran teachers.

As one of the PLC leaders, I was proud of the ninth-grade team's focus on academic language and maintaining a collaborative team that contributed to the overall functioning of the school.

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In the fall of 2008, DLeNM published the first issue of Soleado under the direction of Materials Development Coordinator, Dee McMann. In the 10 years that have followed, Dee's considerable work ethic, vision, and expertise have made Soleado a leading publication in our field, featuring articles from practioners, experts, and researchers from across the country. Dee was also the driving force in the creation of DLeNM's online clearinghouse, FUENTE365 and lead editor for the books and monographs published by Fuente Press. Her contribution to our organization and our field are without parallel.

This past summer, Dee officially entrusted Soleado to Ruth Kriteaman, mentoring, guiding, and encouraging her to maintain the quality everyone has come to expect. Ruth and the DLeNM team are enormously grateful for Dee's inspiring example. Happy retirement, Dee! ¡Te queremos mucho!

