



Communities for Learning: A Framework for Improving Schools from Within

Schools, by their very nature, should consistently be model communities focused on learning and places where all members of the community know and respect one another. In turn, those members honor the wisdom and expertise of their community members and nurture their learning. Focus on learning can become blurred in the midst of the complex systems that make up schools. Therefore, our school invited Giselle Martin-Kniep, a teacher, researcher, author and a highly respected educational consultant from Communities for Learning to join us and present a two-day workshop on September 20-21st and a day of training to our entire faculty on September 22nd.

The EARCOS sponsored weekend workshop brought forty-three professional educators representing 5 countries and 11 international schools to Ruamrudee International School with the goal of exploring the notion of professional learning communities under the facilitation of Giselle Martin-Kniep. Through significant questions such as "Who belongs in professional learning communities?" "What do learning communities require and do?" and "What do we stand to lose without professional learning communities?" the participants explored the six areas of practice (termed "dispositions of practice") that support communities of learning. The six dispositions are interrelated and are utilized to assess and develop individual and organizational capacity to create and sustain learning communities. The dispositions are:

- Commitment to Understanding
- Intellectual Perseverance
- Courage and Initiative
- Expertise
- Reflection
- Collegiality
- Humility/Mindfulness



The 43 participants were enthused about both Giselle as a presenter as well as the foundation from which she presented. In the words of one participant, "(the workshop) gives me a framework to successfully build a more robust learning culture in my school."

The EARCOS weekend was followed by a full day of professional learning for the RIS/RIST faculty and administration. During the course of the day, educators examined the dispositions of practice (see bullets above); deepened their understanding of using collegial inquiry to enhance their work as teachers who wrestle with how to provide successful educational programs; and explored the use of student reflection and its role in building strong learning communities within their classrooms.

We look forward to Giselle's return at the end of January for three more days of focused work on improving the learning of all members of our school community and, as always, moving forward together as a community at RIS/RIST by focusing on learning for all!