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### **What is Guided Democratic Inquiry?**

Guided Democratic Inquiry (GDI) is a multi-step committee process through which schools and districts can address their most difficult and interesting issues and problems. Committee members gain understanding by progressing through specific stages in GDI with the goal of “learning their way through” the problem. The process relies on identifying an important problem, exploring beliefs and concerns about the problem, reading relevant research to develop a common knowledge base, conducting local research, collecting and interpreting data to deepen the common knowledge base, reflection, and both open and honest communication. In this Inquiry Project, the key findings, conclusions and recommendations of the committee will be reported to both the PTA and District bargaining teams. Throughout the project, all documents will be posted on a Palermo GDI website in order to insure the learning and progress of the committee is available to all.

This process was developed through significant work, right in Palermo Union Elementary School District. Two major policy improvements were instituted based on the findings and conclusions that emerged by applying GDI to the issues of Student Retention in Grade and Special Education. The GDI process has been the subject of both national publication and conference presentations. While some districts become locked into fixed positions on important issues, Palermo has been successful in taking a learning approach to better understand the questions at hand prior to changing policy or significant practice.

### **Proposed Schedule**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Stage of Process</b>	<b>Session and Time Expected</b>	<b>Activities</b>
<b>July - August</b>	<i>Facilitator knowledge development</i>		Critical discussions and reading.
<b>September</b>	<i>Build Context and Create Shared Knowledge Base</i>	1. Introduce and initiate GDI: Give a brief review of GDI process and it's history in the district.  1.5 hours	Ground Rules, Focus of Inquiry Statement. Roles: recorder, time keeper. Stand up CBAM: Concerns and Beliefs charted, recorded. Distribute initial lit for reading and review

			between sessions. Invitation for committee member selected readings.
<b>September</b>		2. Reading and Report  1.5 hours	Subgroups chart and report to committee on content of reading assignments. Second reading assignment one
<b>September</b>		3. Reading and Report  1.5 hours	Subgroups chart and report to committee on content of reading assignment two. Third reading assignments made.
<b>September</b>	<i>TBA</i>	4. Video Conf  4 hours	Discussion with experts, debrief and chart expert content
	<i>TBA</i>	5. Video Conf  4 hours	Discussion with experts, debrief and chart expert content.
<b>October</b>		6. Synthesis from three sources: Literature, experts, professional background/personal experience. Answer the question: What did we learn? What do we all know at this point?  1.5 hour	Using 3 sources: reading, experts professional experience, work in table groups to synthesized concepts learned. Subgroups record concept on sticky notes. Concepts categorized and identified on chart paper (affinity diagram).
<b>October</b>	<i>Frame the local Inquiry</i>	7. Based on the knowledge gained from the literature, experts and professional experience, what research questions for local inquiry arise? What are the research methods and sources needed to answer the	Open group work, questions and answers. Leave with clear concepts of tasks of subgroup work.

		<p>questions? What kinds of qualitative and/or quantitative data are needed to answer the questions?</p> <p>1.5 hour</p>	
<b>October</b>		<p>8. Independent group work to develop or locate existing instruments such as rubrics or questionnaires. Design local existing compensation and analysis based on research questions. Develop or adapt rubrics or items for questionnaires.</p> <p>3 hours</p>	<p>Subgroups design instruments, rubrics, questionnaires, analysis. Design research action plan with materials.</p>
<b>October</b>		<p>9. Step Back Consultancy</p> <p>2 hours</p>	<p>Subgroups present research action plans with instruments to panel of university faculty to refine and more accurately target the work. Revise work to date. Check revisions for understanding with university facilitator.</p>
<b>October- November</b>	<i>Conduct the Inquiry as local research</i>	2-4 week period	<p>Implement the local research action plan: conduct current compensation analysis, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups or other. Collect, tabulate, analyze data collected.</p>
<b>November</b>	<i>Report Data and Reflect</i>	<p>10. Each group reports data gathered or analyzed from local research. This is</p>	<p>All meet. All information is openly distributed verbally and in writing. All participants have all</p>

		the data the group decided would be most likely to result in answers to the research questions. 2 hours	the information. Structured through format: "What did you expect to find? What did you find?" Clarifying questions are posed and discussion and conversations take place.
		11. Reflection over a two-week period.	Each group reflects on the new knowledge gained from the local research. Reflection over the possible interpretation of data reported in results also takes place. Informal small group conversations deepen understanding.
<b>December</b>		Facilitator prepares draft findings and conclusions over the two-week reflection period.	Draft F & C posted in website for all committee members. Comments or changes posted on website.
<b>January</b>	<i>Findings and Conclusions</i>	12. Findings and Conclusions Face-to-Face committee meeting.  2.5 hours	All committee members comment, discuss. Strive to reach consensus based on new common knowledge base.
<b>January-February-March</b>	<i>Recommendations</i>	Facilitator prepares recommendations for Bargaining Teams.	Recommendations