

‘Flipped session’ process cuts paperwork for new teachers

PEWAUKEE SCHOOL DISTRICT

By Lauren Anderson

Freeman Staff

PEWAUKEE — When new teachers gear up for the school year in the final weeks of summer, there’s a lot to do. Preparing classrooms, meeting coworkers, becoming familiar with procedures and protocols.

And there’s the mound of paperwork.

Up until now, the Pewaukee School District has held a multiple-hourlong session during teacher orientation to review a large binder filled with information related to health and dental insurance, tax forms, employee handbooks and more. The session was time-consuming, onsize- fits-all, and Human Resources Director Susan Muentner admits, pretty boring.

But a new, increasingly popular teaching model called the “flipped classroom” has provided inspiration for what Muentner hopes is a more efficient employee on-boarding process.

Under the flipped classroom model, the information that’s typically delivered during in-class lectures is instead given to students in a video format. During the time students would normally do homework, they watch the videos. Classtime is then used to complete what would ordinarily be homework.

Muentner observed the flipped classroom in action during a recent classroom visit.

“When I saw it, I thought ‘that’s really cool, I wish teachers would have done that while I was in school,’” Muentner said. “Then I thought, ‘Why couldn’t we do orientation this way?’”

Muentner’s “flipped session” idea will now allow new employees to watch videos on their own, with the ability to pause, replay sections and discuss options with a spouse at home when it’s convenient. Using software called Screencast-OMatic, Muentner will provide teachers a digital recording of her PC screen with audio narration and highlighting of areas on the form.

Muentner will still check in with each employee for quick meetings to make sure they have completed all the forms, but the change should allow for about a half-day in saved time. And that’s time better spent in the classroom, Muentner said.

“Over the four-day orientation period, the focus is on curriculum, technology and teachers meeting with their new principals,” Muentner said. “It’s all education-related things that they need to do know in order to come up to speed. I was taking an afternoon away from that. And I know teachers want to get into the meat of what they’re doing.”

Muentner will try out the new on-boarding process with the new cohort of teachers in August, which will be around 15 to 20 employees.

When she began in HR three decades ago, Muentner said, it was long before today’s technology had entered the scene. She said the new approach to onboarding employees highlights the importance of embracing change and innovation in even the most mundane tasks.

“There’s no reason why we have to do things the same way they’ve always been done,” she said.

“Especially nowadays with so much technology, why not take advantage of it? Technology is a tool, so if you can use those tools to do the same thing faster, better and more friendly, why wouldn’t you?”

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Pewaukee School District Human Resources Director Susan Muenther uses software called Screencast-O-Matic, which provides digital recording of her PC screen with audio narration, to guide new teachers through completing HR forms.

Submitted photo