

theme / PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES



Evolution of the professional learning community:

Revolutionary concept is based on intentional collegial learning.

How and why teachers work together has changed considerably through recent generations. Consider a fundamental definition of the professional learning community, and learn how this concept has developed over time. The author also summarizes five key elements of professional learning communities from research literature.

By Shirley M. Hord

A shift in school culture: *Collective commitments focus on change that benefits student learning.*

Establishing professional learning communities requires much more than structural changes. Substantial changes in a school's culture include a shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning, a new vision of how teachers work, and a sustained fixation on student results.

By Robert Eaker and Janel Keating

Crunching numbers, changing practices: *A close look at student data turns the tide in efforts to close the achievement gap.*

Viewmont Elementary School in Hickory, N.C., was a new school with a respected staff and decent school performance. Once the faculty took a deeper look at the data, they made a commitment to close the significant achievement gaps they found. Transforming practices as well as attitudes carried the school to new heights.

By Gary Waddell and Ginny Lee

Two high school districts recite the ABCs of professional learning communities.

Two high school districts, one in California and one in Arizona, adopted essential tenets of a professional learning community to ensure that students would have equal access to high-quality learning. Since the inception of the communities, students have seen unprecedented gains.

By Timothy D. Kanold, Mona Toncheff, and Cindy Douglas

Districts speak with one voice: *Clarity and coherence come from professional learning communities.*

With an eye on results and support for teacher collaboration, two districts focused on exactly what students needed to learn in order to succeed. Educators in Overland Park, Kan., and Buffalo Grove, Ill., created a culture of continuous improvement by speaking with one voice and selecting targeted goals.

By Tom Many and Dennis King

Keep the leadership pipeline flowing: *Districts can adopt these 5 strategies to streamline succession planning.*

Professional learning communities not only rely on effective leadership, they also support its development in a district. Follow five strategies for developing leaders in the context of learning communities in order to sustain leadership over time.

By Bill Hall

One step at a time: *Many professional learning teams pass through these 7 stages.*

New educator learning teams don't necessarily know how to start working together. Read how teams progress through seven stages of development, and consider what school leaders can do to support this growth.

By Parry Graham and Bill Ferriter

features

Q&A with Judith Warren Little. *Declaration of interdependence: Educators need deep conversations about teaching and learning to spark real changes in practice.*

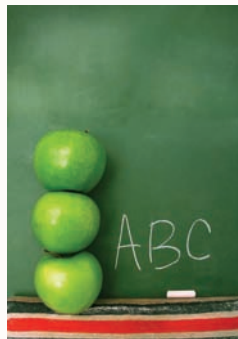
A prominent researcher of professional learning communities shares her thoughts on what we know about this concept as well as why schools aren't generally prepared to work this way. She also discusses the role of leadership, why external support is valuable, and the types of conversations that move reflective practice forward.

By Tracy Crow

Leading without leaving the classroom: *Tap into teachers' skills and knowledge to solve school problems.*

Now is the time for teachers to step up as leaders in their schools — without leaving the classroom. Teacher leadership has become more important than ever. Teachers have new roles to fulfill and new responsibilities to assume in order for schools to make the best improvements for students.

By Cathy Owens



coming up

In Fall 2008 *JSD*: **Using evidence**