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JSD

THE AUTHORITY ON PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

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LOOK BEYOND TEST SCORES

EXPLORE DATA'S MORAL SIDE

EMPOWERED TEACHERS BOOST TEXAS SCHOOL

Examining evidence

Q&A: JOELLEN KILLION ON EVALUATION AND COACHING

inside

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departments

features

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HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

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JSD STAFF
Editor: Tracy Crow
Designer: Kitty Black
Copy editor: Sue Chevalier

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editor's note/ TRACY CROW

USE EVIDENCE TO MAKE THE CASE FOR LEARNING

Social scientist Samuel Popkin wrote about the concept of "gut rationality" to explain how voters make decisions during presidential elections (1994). His theory is that voters take a bit of new information about a candidate, add that to their experiences, knowledge, and biases, and make their choice. Voters count on their instincts to decide what makes a person presidential.

When educators come to conclusions about how students perform, do we use something like gut rationality? Or do we take time to study a range of evidence?

There is no shortage of data in education. Some schools are truly data-driven. They use data to understand where students succeed and where they fall short. They analyze data to know which students struggle at which times in specific contexts. Once they understand what students need, they craft educator learning in response. Importantly, they keep gathering and studying data to know if their interventions produce the intended results.

Tracy Crow is the editor of *JSD* and www.nsdc.org. You can contact her at tracy.crow@nsdc.org.

Yet other schools spend an enormous amount of time and energy on data without making any improvements. Just because we're surrounded by data doesn't mean we know what to do with it, or that we have the right data to determine what our problems are or what the solutions might be. In those cases, it's easy to understand why educators would turn to gut instinct.

As this issue of *JSD* demonstrates, evidence does not have to overwhelm schools — rather, evidence becomes a tool for improvement. Too often, we equate data with standardized test scores, but data come in all shapes and formats. Evidence is on the walls of the school hallways. Students create evidence every time they respond to a question or display a team project. Teachers gather to create assessments and discuss student results within and across grade levels and subject areas.

This issue of *JSD* explores what kinds of evidence are useful in particular contexts. The authors describe the support that teachers and school leaders need to best use available evidence. In many articles, readers will notice that educators don't leave their gut instincts at the door. They use those instincts as evidence, always in combination with other sources of data.

Beginning with this issue, Stephanie Hirsh, NSDC's executive director, contributes to *JSD* as the "Results" columnist (p. 53). In each issue, Hirsh will share an educator's professional learning challenge and the potential solutions that may lead to the results we want for all educators and their students. If you have challenges you would like to share, please e-mail her at stephanie.hirsh@nsdc.org. The most recent author of this column, former NSDC Director of Communications Joan Richardson, has become editor-in-chief of *Phi Delta Kappan* magazine. We wish her well in her new post.

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Popkin, S.L. (1994). *The reasoning voter: Communication and persuasion in presidential campaigns* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ■

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NEWS AND NOTES OF THE NATIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

BECOME AN ADVOCATE FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Members of NSDC are experts in effective professional learning. More than ever, NSDC needs to tap into your expertise to improve the policy context for educators. NSDC members and other interested educators now have a free downloadable tool kit that they can use to advocate for federal policies that support professional learning.

NSDC's legislative advocacy agenda is focused on improving elements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 that deal with professional development. If federal policy models, supports, and provides incentives for good practice in professional learning, NSDC believes that an improved federal policy will have a ripple effect on improving state policy, local policy, collective bargaining agreements, and finally the day-to-day business of teaching.

Download the tool kit at **www.nsdc.org/legislativeupdate.cfm.**

NSDC's new Education Advocacy Toolkit answers questions about:

- Whom you should contact;
- What your message should be; and
- How you can most effectively deliver your message.

As part of our advocacy work, NSDC has established a legislative action network called the NSDC Advocacy Team or "A-Team." The A-Team is made up of NSDC members like you who believe in NSDC's purpose and commit to participating in advocacy efforts to improve federal policy on professional development. Over the next two years, NSDC will support A-Team members in developing their advocacy skills and achieving five advocacy milestones:

- Learn about NSDC's federal policy proposal.

- Create an "elevator speech" and deliver it to a critical friend for feedback.
- Write a letter to your representative and senators and get a reply.
- Get to know the legislative assistant responsible for education in your representative's and senator's offices.
- Meet with your representative and senators.

We need you on our A-Team. Download the tool kit today at www.nsdc.org/legislativeupdate.cfm. Use it tomorrow to become a powerful advocate for policies that will ensure that every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.

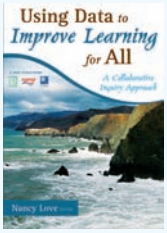
Back issues: Find 10 years of *JSD* issues online. The archive is available to all NSDC members. Use your membership number and the password "learning" to log in for the first time.

NSDC BOOK CLUB

NSDC members who have added the NSDC Book Club to their membership package will receive *Using Data to Improve Learning for All: A Collaborative Inquiry Approach,* edited by Nancy Love.

Using Data to Improve Learning for All will help school leaders use a powerful collaborative inquiry process to engage in reflective dialogue about the use of data to improve outcomes for all students. The book includes detailed examples of schools that have demonstrated dramatic gains by building collaborative cultures, nurturing ongoing inquiry, and using data systematically.

Through a partnership with Corwin Press, NSDC members can add the Book Club to their membership at any time and receive four books a year for only $49 annually.



To receive *Using Data to Improve Learning for All*, you must add the NSDC Book Club to your membership before Sept. 30. The book will be mailed to NSDC Book Club members in October.

For more information about this or any membership package, call NSDC at 800-727-7288 or e-mail NSDCoffice@nsdc.org.

on board / KAREN DYER

WHAT DO WE ACCEPT AS EVIDENCE?

"Show me the money!" This phrase, from the 1996 movie *Jerry Maguire,* has often been used in a challenging way. The speaker wants someone to demonstrate proof or validate claims. On a recent school visit, I heard this term from a teacher who was prodding a student to substantiate an opinion with appropriate evidence. As everyone in the class, including the student, broke into laughter, I was reminded of the increased importance of verification and corroboration in our daily lives in schools.

In my early years as a classroom teacher, my behaviors and decisions were often based on what my gut was telling me. Later on, I referred to this as following my hunches. In recent years, I've come to describe this as being intuitive. I learned to trust my feelings as a filter to help me make sense of information and situations. This is not to say that I was a stranger to empirical or qualitative data. Rather, I recognized that logical, rational, pragmatic applications were complemented by intuitive responses. What I've learned, however, is that, despite the success that I've had living by my hunches, I'm more often than not required to have proof as an indication of effectiveness.

Karen Dyer is president of the National Staff Development Council.

In recent years, educators have been charged to "show me the money" in terms of documenting evidence of how professional learning for adults is linked to increased learning for students. Our assertions are not sufficient as we work with various stakeholders (parents, community members, policy makers, funders, sponsors, and other educational colleagues) to solicit support for professional learning contexts, processes, and activities. We've come to realize that our hunches about professional development must be confirmed through the use of recognized and widely accepted measures.

NSDC's Board of Trustees and staff, like many of you, strongly believe that "every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves." Even though our gut, hunches, intuitions, and even prior experiences can be used to affirm our statement of belief, we continue to examine the evidence regarding the impact of professional learning, including NSDC's Standards for Staff Development, on student achievement. We consistently strive to explore the research (including our individual action research projects), access the thinking of thought leaders, engage in conversations with practitioners in the field, and identify and celebrate the exemplars that we know demonstrate the link between professional and student learning. Our intent is to be able to confidently but appropriately respond when asked to "show me the money." ■

powerful WORDS

"In organizations, real power is generated through relationships. The patterns of relationships and the capacities to form them are more important than tasks, functions, roles, and positions."

— Margaret Wheatley

Kathy Blackmore named St. Louis conference chair

Kathy Blackmore has been named chair of the host committee for NSDC's 41st Annual Conference in St. Louis, Mo., in December 2009.

Blackmore is executive director of the Parkway School District in St. Louis County. She directs curriculum, instruction, assessment, technology integration, pupil personnel, and professional development for the district.

Her work in professional development began in the early '90s, and she has been active in NSDC since that time. Blackmore chaired the Missouri Staff Development Council (MSDC) Show Me Conference in 2004 and was president of MSDC the following year.

The 2009 conference will be Dec. 5-9 at the St. Louis Convention Center. Registration begins in July 2009.

NSDC CALENDAR

September: NSDC Board of Trustees election.

Sept. 29: Deadline for proposals to present at NSDC's 5th Summer Conference in Boston, 2009.

Oct. 13: Early registration deadline for 2008 Annual Conference. Save $50.

November: Submit proposals online to present at NSDC's 41st Annual Conference in St. Louis, 2009.

Dec. 6-10: NSDC 40th Annual Conference, Washington, D.C.

Vote in NSDC election

In September, NSDC members will have the opportunity to vote online to fill two open positions on the NSDC Board of Trustees. Information about the candidates has been posted at **www.nsdc.org/connect/elections.cfm.** By Sept. 1, members will receive an e-mail with a link to a secure ballot to make their selections. Members who cannot or choose not to vote online can request a paper ballot from Joel Reynolds (e-mail joel.reynolds@nsdc.org or call 972-421-0900). All ballots must be submitted or received by Sept. 30, 2008.

The winning candidates will begin their term of office at the end of the annual conference in December 2008.

Thanks to NSDC Summer Conference sponsors

The NSDC Board of Trustees, Summer Conference host committee, and NSDC staff acknowledge the following organizations for their generous support as sponsors of NSDC's 4th Annual Summer Conference for Teacher Leaders and the Administrators Who Support Them, held in July in Orlando, Fla.

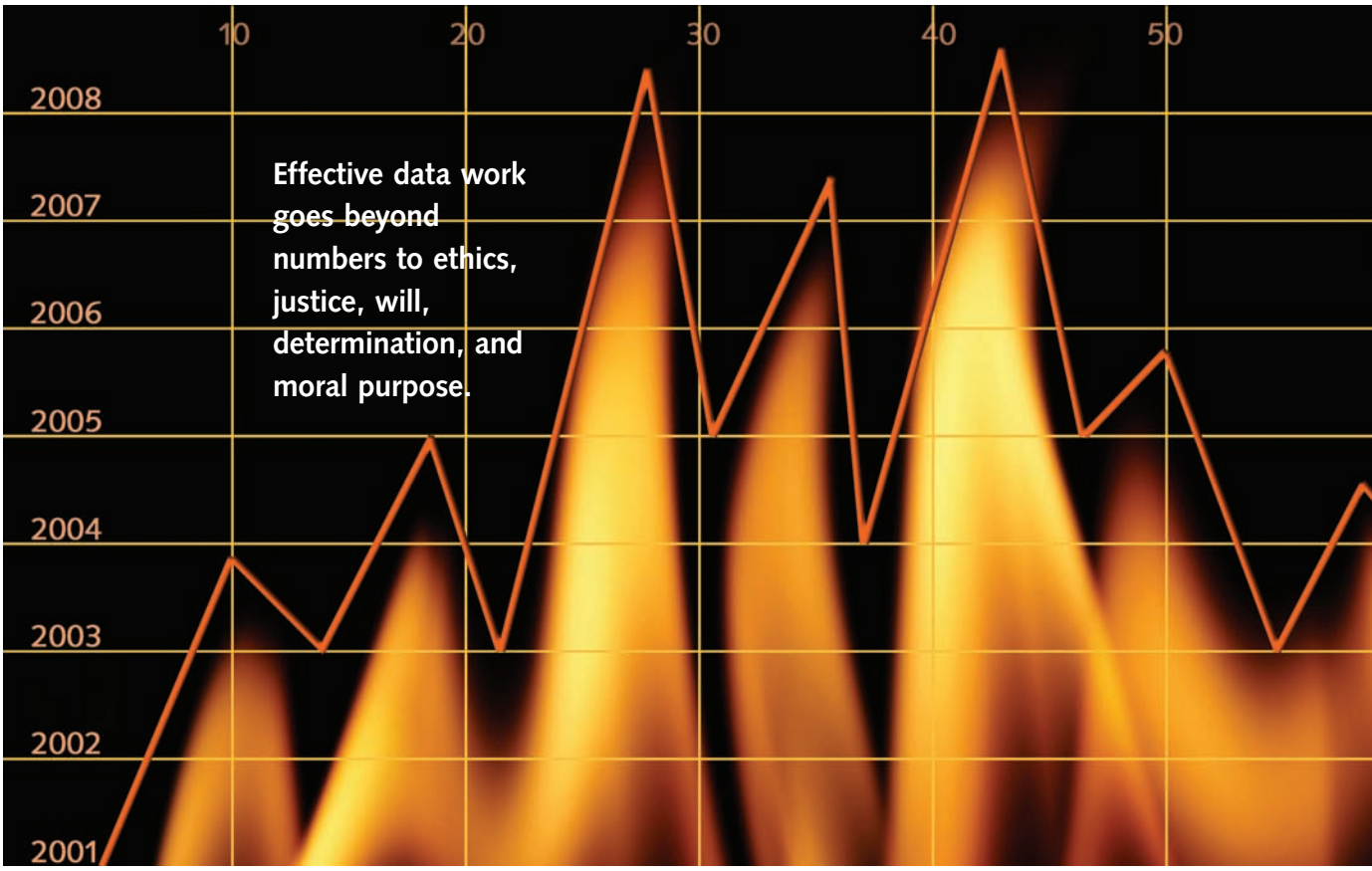
- National Education Association
- American Federation of Teachers
- MetLife Foundation
- National Association of State Title I Directors
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
- Pi Lambda Theta
- Teachscape
- Barnes & Noble
- Beacon Educator
- Capella University
- College of Education at the University of Central Florida

Their sponsorship helped make the conference a successful event. We look forward to their continued support.

powerful WORDS

"Discovery consists of seeing what everyone else has seen and thinking what no one else has thought."

— Albert Szent-Gyorgyi



PASSION AND PRINCIPLE

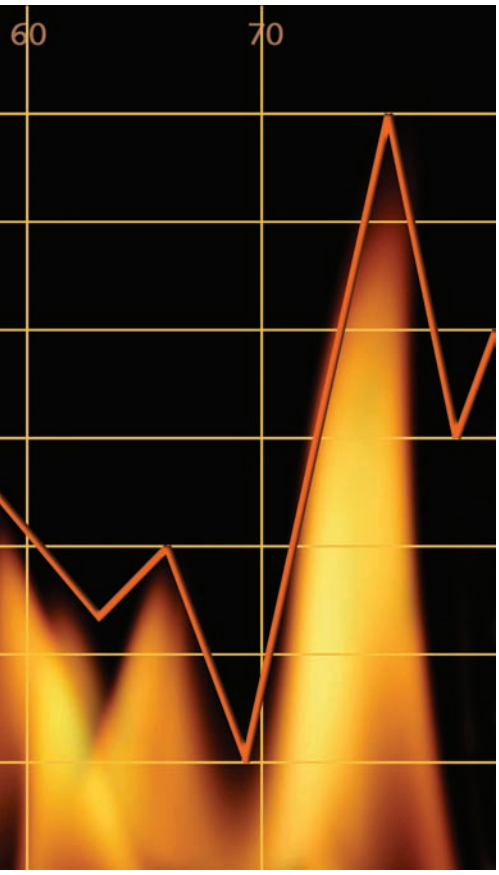
GROUND EFFECTIVE DATA USE

BY NANCY LOVE, KATHERINE E. STILES, SUSAN MUNDRY, AND KATHRYN DiRANNA

Franklin CampbellJones, author and cultural proficiency expert, says, "Get ethical before you get technical" (personal communication, 2005). School improvement without will and moral purpose — without a genuine commitment to all students — is an empty exercise in compliance that, in our experience, can do more harm than good. We have seen educators use data to "more accurately" track students, further widening the opportunity-to-learn gap. In response to achievement gaps, one school mandated lunchtime tutoring for all black students, regardless of whether or not they failed the state test (Confrey & Makar, 2005). Avoiding these and other data-based disasters is not a technical matter. It is an ethical matter that begins with will, passion, and determination.

As you look to move your schools away from unproductive data prac-

tices and toward high-capacity uses of data, be sure to include a strong foundation of data literacy and collaborative inquiry knowledge, skills, and dispositions as well as a spiritual and



moral commitment to serve each and every student.

While an effective and comprehensive process for using data is complex and requires extensive collaborative work, knowledge development, time, and support, we share here our foundational assumptions, the values that guide our work in the Using Data Process. Please use these as a catalyst to clarify your thinking as well as for dialogue with the colleagues who will join you in using data to improve teaching and learning.

ASSUMPTION 1

Making significant progress in improving student learning and closing achievement gaps is a moral responsibility and a real possibility in a relatively short amount of time — two to five years. It is not children's poverty or race or ethnic background that stands in the way of achievement. It is school practices and policies and the beliefs that underlie them that pose the biggest obstacles.

Federal and state policies will come and go. But one moral imperative is abiding: educator's deep responsibility for the learning of every child. This assumption implies a shift from a compliance mentality — a sense of external accountability, something someone is making us do — to a sense of internal and collective responsibility. It also reflects our belief that it is impossible to use data as a lever for change without talking about race, class, and culture and our beliefs about the capabilities of children. It is the silence about these issues that has kept us from confronting problems and taking action.

The potential to dramatically improve the learning of traditionally underserved students has been demonstrated time and again. The Using Data Project schools serving black, Hispanic, Native American, and poor students significantly improved student achievement within three years (Zuman, 2006). The Education Trust database Dispelling the Myth contains data on thousands of schools that are serving students living in poverty and from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, yet are achieving at high levels (Education Trust, 2003).

Improvement strategies such as aligning curriculum to rigorous standards, frequently monitoring student progress, organizing schools to engage in short cycles of collaborative inquiry, providing professional development linked to student goals, and offering immediate extra help for students who need it were implemented in the Using Data field-test sites and paid off with increased student-learning gains.

This article is adapted from *The Data Coach's Guide to Improving Learning for All Students: Unleashing the Power of Collaborative Inquiry* (Corwin Press, 2008) and is used with permission.

ASSUMPTION 2

Data have no meaning. Meaning is imposed through interpretation. Frames of reference, the way we see the world, influence the meaning we derive from data. Effective data users become aware of and critically examine

NANCY LOVE is director of program development at Research for Better Teaching, where she leads research and development. She is the former director of the Using Data Project. You can contact her at love@RBTeach.com.

KATHERINE E. STILES is a project director and senior program associate at WestEd. She is co-director of WestEd's National Academy for Science and Mathematics Education Leadership and several other projects for education leaders. You can contact her at KStiles@wested.org.

SUSAN MUNDRY is associate director of mathematics, science, and technology programs at WestEd. She is co-director of WestEd's National Academy for Science and Mathematics Education Leadership and manages other projects on developing leadership and improving professional development. You can contact her at SMundry@wested.org.

KATHRYN DiRANNA is the statewide director of WestEd's K-12 Alliance, which focuses on school- and department-wide change through programs that address content, instruction, assessment, and leadership. You can contact her at KDiRanna@wested.org.

their frames of reference and assumptions (Wellman & Lipton, 2004, pp. ix-xi). Conversely, data can also be a catalyst to questioning assumptions and changing practices based on new ways of thinking.

This assumption is closely related to the first and is why we place so much emphasis on surfacing assumptions, particularly assumptions about children and their capabilities and beliefs about teaching and learning. If one holds the view that whether students learn is the student's responsibility and not that of the teacher, one might then look at a student's poor performance on assessments and conclude that it is entirely the student's fault. There is nothing to be done to improve teaching. If one believes that black students are not as capable as white students, then data that reveal an achievement gap between these groups does nothing but confirm that belief. The reaction is complacency or resignation. Beliefs about teaching also profoundly influence data interpretation. For example, one teacher believes that students learn best when they are actively constructing their own meaning. Another believes that skill building and practice and teacher talk are how students learn. When examining student work that reveals a student's confusion, these two teachers will react very differently.

When one is open to critically examining assumptions, data can be a catalyst to discarding old frames of reference and embracing new ones. We have seen educators in our project look at disaggregated student learning data and become outraged by inequities that they had not been aware of before.

On the other hand, when one is open to critically examining assumptions, data can be a catalyst to discarding old frames of reference and embracing new ones. We have seen educators in our project look at disaggregated student learning data and become outraged by inequities that they had not been aware of before. Simply examining data about schools that were closing achievement gaps has caused others to question their belief that these gaps are inevitable. When teachers observed that teaching in a new way actually reached more students, they changed their assumptions about teaching and learning. Through their collaborative inquiry, many data team members threw out unproductive, blame-the-victim explanations of poor student performance and shifted the focus to instruction.

USING DATA PROJECT

The Using Data Project, a collaboration between TERC and WestEd, set out to develop, field-test, and pilot a program to provide educators with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to put school data to work to improve teaching and learning to close achievement gaps. The goal of the project was to prepare education professionals to serve as data coaches. The project worked with several schools around the country to implement the Using Data Process, a structured approach to collaborative inquiry that has contributed to significant gains in student achievement and narrowing of achievement gaps as well as increased collaboration, data use, and instructional improvement in schools nationally (Zuman, 2006).

ASSUMPTION 3

Collaborative inquiry — a process where teachers construct their understanding of student learning problems and invent and test solutions together through rigorous and frequent use of data and reflective dialogue — unleashes the resourcefulness and creativity to continuously improve instruction and student learning.

Teachers possess tremendous knowledge, skill, and experience. Collaborative inquiry creates a structure for them to share that expertise with each other, discover what they are doing that is working and do more of it, and confront what isn't working and change it. When teachers generate their own questions, engage in dialogue, and make sense of data, they develop a much deeper understanding of what is going on relative to student learning. They develop ownership of the problems that surface, seek out research and information on best practices, and adopt or invent and implement the solutions they generate. When teachers engage in ongoing collaborative inquiry focused on teaching and learning and making effective use of data, they improve results for students.

ASSUMPTION 4

A school culture characterized by collective responsibility for student learning, commitment to equity, and trust is the foundation for collaborative inquiry. In the absence of such a culture, schools may be unable to respond effectively to the data they have.

This assumption is based on a dual meaning of the word responsibility. As in our first assumption, responsibility implies the moral imperative. But it also holds another meaning, which is, quite literally, the ability to respond: "response-ability" (Wellman & Lipton, 2004). Long before state tests, plenty of data were available to let us know some students were not learning: students slumping down in their seats; going through day after day of school without being

engaged; having poor grades, poor attendance, and high dropout rates. However, in the absence of a collaborative culture where everyone takes responsibility and is committed to improving student learning, educators could not respond to the data. Schools that have "response-ability" do not leave student learning to chance. Collaborative schools are organized in grade-level or course- or subject-based teams where this "response-ability" is enacted as part of the daily work of teachers.

A hallmark of such a high-performing culture is a commitment to equity. Singleton & Linton (2006) define education equity as "raising the achievement of all students while narrowing the gap between the highest- and lowest-performing students and eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories" (p. 46). Equity does not mean that all students receive an equal level of resources and support, but that those of the greatest need receive the level of support they need to succeed.

A collaborative community committed to equity requires a high level of trust. In high-functioning cultures, educators trust each other to discuss "undiscussables" such as race, reveal their own practice and mistakes, root for one another, and face together the brutal facts that data often reveal (Barth, 2006). For all of these reasons, districts that make the most of their investment into data management systems place an equal or greater priority in strengthening school cultures and the ability to respond to the data.

ASSUMPTION 5

Using data itself does not improve teaching. Improved teaching comes about when teachers implement sound teaching practices grounded in cultural proficiency — understanding and respect for their students' cultures — and a thorough understanding of the subject matter and how to teach it, including understanding student thinking and ways of making content accessible to all students.

It is easy to get swept away in the data-driven mania provoked by federal and state education accountability policies, where data can sometimes seem to be an end in themselves. But test results, lists of "failing" schools, bar graphs, tables, proficiency levels, even student work do nothing by

themselves to improve teaching unless they spark powerful dialogue and changes in practice. For example, it doesn't take hours of data analysis to discover that students struggle with solving nonroutine mathematics problems or reading informational text. But talking about and learning more and more about what to do about those problems does take time and is where teams gain momentum for instructional improvement.

Questions like the following merit as much time in data team meetings as does the actual data analysis:

- Who among us is having success and what are they doing?
- What does research say about how students learn this content or what typical misconceptions they struggle with?
- What have other schools done to solve this problem?
- What would a culturally proficient approach to this content look like? What content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge will strengthen our ability to teach this content? What does the research base on effective teaching tell us?
- What kind of professional development will help us learn these skills and knowledge?

The data are just the tip of the iceberg, alerting us to common areas and reminding us that what lies beneath is what counts — the curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development practices that will prove student learning. Data use is not a substitute for the hard work of improving instruction.

ASSUMPTION 6

Every member of a collaborative school community can act as a leader, dramatically impacting the quality of relationships, the school culture, and student learning.

The Using Data Process supports and promotes distributed leadership, where all staff members take full responsibility and do their parts to get the job — academic success for all students — done. Marzano, Waters, & McNulty (2005) identified 21 leadership behaviors correlated with student academic achievement. Virtually all of these 21 responsibilities, which include celebrating accomplishments, challenging the status quo, fostering shared beliefs and community, staying focused on goals, communicating ideas and beliefs, actively engaging others in decision making and instructional improvement, and fostering strong relationships, are functions of data coaches and data team members as well as of school and district administrators. In particular, data use is no longer a specialty of the assessment or central office or the principal. Everyone in the school understands and uses data in ways that contribute to instructional improvement.

Using school data well is a matter of will — the appetite, passion, and determination to serve every child as if he or she were our own.

Becoming a data coach and building data teams is all about developing the ability to think, speak, and act differently — to act as courageous leaders. Educators we work with often ask us, "How do we deal with resignation in our schools?" or "How do we get more people to believe that all students can learn?" One answer is to be full of possibility yourself, to frequently, succinctly, and clearly articulate what you believe, and to consistently act on those beliefs. We have seen data teams shift their direction completely when one team member took a clear stand against tracking students and provided evidence of its damaging effects.

Using school data well is not just a matter of skill — although that is essential. It is a matter of will — the appetite, passion, and determination to serve every child as if he or she were our own and the courage to respond to data by choosing assumptions and actions that produce the best possible result for our students. When we approach data with will and skill, we unleash their power to serve each and every child.

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DATA DIALOGUE

Focused conversations put evidence to work in the classroom

BY CINDY HARRISON AND CHRIS BRYAN

As teachers and leaders are well aware, schools and districts across the country have invested enormous amounts of money and energy in creating data management systems so that teachers can access information about their students' performance. With these systems in place, the focus now needs to move to the structures and allocation of time that will allow teachers to engage in data conversations about student achievement and its implications for classroom planning and instruction. Such time and structures will ensure that the necessary conditions are in place for data to be used to impact student achievement.

Following and in the table on p. 16, we summarize a framework that

Types of data conversations

Type of data dialogue	Data used	Who is involved	Conversation topics	Frequency
Whole-school conversations	State assessments, district benchmarks	School improvement team, entire staff	• Patterns of student achievement. • Needs for schoolwide programs (instructional, curricular, professional learning). • Needs for additional knowledge and skills for staff.	2 times a year
One-on-one conversations with focus on multi-year growth of students	State assessments, benchmark exams, end-of-course assessments, classroom assessments, common assessments	Teacher and administrator and/or coach	• Growth of students. • Overall proficiency of students. • Instructional strategies to meet student learning needs.	2 to 3 times a year
Department and/or grade-level teams with focus on individual student interventions	Student performance on classroom and common assessments, discipline records, student work	Core teams, grade-level teams	• Diagnosis of individual knowledge and skills. • Next steps for students. • Grouping of students for instruction and intervention. • Pyramid of interventions.	Once a month or more often
Department and/or grade-level teams with focus on instructional strategies	State assessments, benchmark assessments, common assessments, unit assessments	Grade-level or content-area groups	• Growth of students. • Patterns in proficiency. • Instructional strategies. • Assessment strategies.	Once a week to once every 6 to 8 weeks
Student goal-setting conversations	Student work, grades, state assessments, common assessments, benchmark assessments	Teacher and individual students	• Goal setting. • Strategies for success. • Celebrations of learning.	Once a week to once a month

outlines a variety of types of data conversations. For each type of data conversation, we define the purpose, identify possible data sources, recommend frequency, suggest possible topics for the conversation, and identify who should be involved.

Effective data conversations share several common characteristics, whether at the school, grade, department, or team level. Characteristics include:

- Teams need to do an analysis of the current state of student achievement and create SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, results-based, and time-bound) for student learning.
- Practitioners who can take action and monitor student learning should be the core participants in team conversations.
- Members of the data conversation should agree that the data they are examining is a good measure of student learning.
- Data used in these conversations can be from national or state tests or common assessments.
- Teams need a facilitator who keeps the conversation focused on teaching and learning, asks the hard questions, and ensures that the group moves to action.
- Teams need a recorder who assists in making sure all members of the group leave with the same understanding of the discussion and next steps.

CINDY HARRISON is an independent consultant who works with schools and districts around the world. Her work focuses on instructional coaching, teacher leadership, organizational change, school improvement, and professional learning communities. You can contact her at harrison.cindy@gmail.com.

CHRIS BRYAN is an independent consultant. Her work focuses on standards-based planning and instruction, school improvement, and instructional coaching. You can contact her at lcrsbryan@msn.com.

DATA CONVERSATIONS

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM CONVERSATIONS

Purpose: To create and monitor a schoolwide implementation plan for continuous improvement by analyzing student/school data trends.

Possible data sources: Student achievement (formative and summative) assessments, including disaggregation by subgroups, demographic trends, and perception/survey.

Frequency: Quarterly or trimester data reviews.

Possible topics: The school improvement team analyzes and interprets data so that the whole school understands how the school is functioning. These conversations include setting goals in areas identified for improvement, examining best practices to be used schoolwide, and identifying benchmarks to measure growth in student achievement as well as levels of implementation of the identified practice. Moving beyond using the practices to assessment of the impact of the practices assists the team in identifying where they need to make adjustments.

School improvement team conversations include setting goals in areas identified for improvement, examining best practices to be used schoolwide, and identifying benchmarks to measure growth in student achievement.

Who should be involved: A representative team of parents, teachers, students and administrators.

School example: Cooper Elementary School found that they were in the bottom quartile in math for the past three years. Although the school had been implementing the *Investigations* math curriculum during that time, levels of implementation of the curriculum varied in individual classrooms. To assess whether the new curriculum was making a difference in math achievement, the team needed to collect data and assess the level of implementation first. The team asked each staff member to complete an Innovation Configura-tions map at the beginning, middle, and end of the year. In addition, a set of "look-fors" guided the principal during her walk-throughs and was also used by instructional coaches when they worked with individuals or teams of teachers to co-plan. In order to assess gaps in implementation and teacher knowledge and skills, data were exam-

ined by the school improvement team to decide on necessary allocations of resources to move the school forward.

TEACHER-SUPERVISOR CONVERSATION AND TEACHER-COACH/MENTOR CONVERSATION

There are two types of conversations that might occur here. Conversations between teachers and supervisors tend to be evaluative, while those between teachers and coaches/mentors are usually conducted in a non-evaluative manner.

Purpose: To identify trends in the achievement of students over time in an individual teacher's classroom.

Possible data sources: State tests, common assessments, district benchmarks.

Frequency: One or two times a year for administrator-teacher and as often as weekly with teacher-coach/mentor.

Possible topics: Reflect on the growth in student learning (individual, subgroups, and whole group), identify strategies to implement and growth areas for the teacher.

In the departmental or grade-level conversation focused on the individual student, the purpose is to identify next steps, interventions, and focus areas for additional student learning.

These conversations often focus on the performances of a teacher's past and current students and help to identify areas of success and weakness. Participants may discuss programs and classroom practices to identify and solve problems rather than to assign blame for results. These conversations can focus on data over time and can also include conversation around the teacher's current students and their needs. The growth of students is the focus rather than current proficiency of students so that teachers consider end points and also look at the growth of individual students.

Who should be involved: Individual teacher and building-level administrator or coach.

School example: Felicia, a middle school social studies teacher, has been teaching for more than 20 years. In the last two years, the social studies department has been focused on literacy in the content area. In her data conversation with the principal at the beginning of the year, she noted that the English language learners were not making much progress in writing or reading in her classroom. Felicia identified this as an area for growth on her improvement plan. She and her principal then looked at her current students and identified some strategies to implement with the ELL students. They agreed to meet again in three months and look at growth in writing by examining writing samples from the beginning of the year and three months later.

DEPARTMENT/GRADE-LEVEL CONVERSATION FOCUSED ON THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT

Purpose: To identify next steps, interventions, and necessary focus areas for additional student learning.

Possible data sources: Achievement and readiness data such as state, district, or common assessments.

Frequency: Once a week to every six weeks.

Possible topics: Teams agree on and administer assessments to gain information about their students in relation to the school improvement plan. They create class profiles that identify strengths and weaknesses of individual students in a variety of areas which can then be used to differentiate instruction, provide interventions, and focus classroom instruction. Monitoring progress frequently ensures that the makeup of the student groups remains flexible. The team identifies strategies and allows enough time to determine the student's responsiveness to the strategy.

The grade-level/department team follows a problem-solving model that includes:

- Analyze data and reach agreement on areas of need;
- Group students by strengths and areas of need, identifying similarities and differences between classrooms;
- Research/examine best practices;
- Develop grade-level/department action plans;
- Implement the plan; and
- Evaluate and revise the plan based on student growth data.

Who should be involved: Grade-level or department teams.

School example: In September, an 8th-grade core team at Villa Nova Middle School administered its preassessment and noticed that it had a large group of students who scored low in vocabulary. The team decided to address this need by grouping students for scaffolded instruction across classrooms, preteaching unit vocabulary, assigning students to after-school intervention groups, and monitoring progress through common unit assessments. After each structure was implemented, the 8th-grade team discussed student growth and identified next steps for individuals and groups of students.

DEPARTMENT/GRADE-LEVEL CONVERSATIONS AROUND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Purpose: To engage in deep conversations around teaching and student learning, identifying student successes and challenges and then moving to teaching strategies and approaches that are successful and those that need to be changed.

Possible data sources: Common assessments, district benchmarks, individual teacher-created assessments, pacing charts, or examples of actual student work.

Frequency: One or more times a month.

Possible topics: Teachers discuss

what happened for students in the learning process and what instructional practices made a difference. Sometimes the conversation may focus on success with certain types of students (special education or advanced students) or with levels of student thinking exemplified in the work. Co-planning units including assessments, teaching the units, and then discussing student learning results is a valuable way to structure these discussions. Develop team goals to support school improvement goals and identify teacher learning needs. Some schools have incorporated the lesson study approach into these data conversations.

Who should be involved: The teachers involved and instructional coaches, when available. Some schools include administrators in these discussions; however, teachers can be brutally honest about their own strengths and weaknesses when there is no threat of information being used in evaluation. In this case, the administrator's role is to allocate time and ensure that these sessions focus on the importance of reflecting on student learning and teacher practices.

School example: Jorge, a high school physics teacher, is meeting with four of his peers who also teach physics. They look at student results for a unit they co-planned and taught. As they compare results, they notice patterns of high achievement and a high level of growth for students from the pretest to the final assessment for the classrooms where Jorge was the primary instructor. He shares strategies he used, and the team agrees to incorporate the strategies into their next unit.

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT GOAL-SETTING CONVERSATIONS

Purpose: To provide students with an understanding of their current level of achievement in order to set goals with action strategies so that students are actively engaged in learning.

Possible data sources: Student work, grades, state assessments, common assessments, district benchmarks.

Frequency: Beginning of year and after individual units.

Possible topics: Students look at their own performance and may compare results to the defined proficiency level and/or other students' performance. This is usually a conversation between teacher and student but could be small-group or whole-class conversation. Teaching students strategies for success is an integral part of this conversation. Often data walls are used to inform and motivate students to reach higher levels of performance. Celebrating success needs to be a part of this practice.

Who should be involved: Classroom teacher and individual student.

School example: In Aisha's high school algebra class, students set learning goals based on data. Students take an exam or quiz and then analyze their results on an analysis spreadsheet that includes an action plan. The teacher asks students to write a summary of the learning at the end of each unit. Students identify key math concepts, their areas of strength for the unit, a problem they still struggle with, what they have done to monitor their progress towards proficiency, and what they will do to move themselves further towards proficiency. The teacher reads each summary and conducts a brief student conference. ■

MIX IT UP

Variety is key to a well-rounded data-analysis plan

BY LOIS BROWN EASTON

Variety may be the spice of life, but in terms of data sources, variety is more than a spice — it's one of the basic food groups. Alternative data sources, such as student interviews and walkthroughs, are essential for a well-balanced diet. Data from test scores alone, whether from norm-referenced or criterion-referenced tests, state, district, or school tests, may provide protein, for example, but other data sources help keep educators, schools, districts, and states healthy.

Many data-analysis experts advocate for gathering evidence that complements student achievement data. Victoria Bernhardt (2008) recommends that achievement data be coordinated with demographic, perception

LOIS BROWN EASTON is a consultant, coach, and author. She is the retired director of professional development at Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center, Estes Park, Colo. She is the editor of *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*, 2nd Edition (NSDC, 2008). You can contact her at leastoners@aol.com.

(survey), and school process data (what the school does to help students learn — after-school tutoring and small classes, for example). In terms of student achievement data, Bernhardt and others (Love, Stiles, Mundry, & DiRanna, 2008) advise educators to collect a variety of data, including student work itself. Several strategies for powerful professional learning can help schools, districts, and states access achievement data from sources other than test scores. Other strategies can help educators collect process data.

SOURCES FOR EVIDENCE OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

ACCESSING STUDENT VOICES

Harvetta Robertson and Shirley Hord make the point that educators often access last the voices they should access first (2008). Facilitators of task forces focused on school improvement seek systemwide representation, but don't often ask students — those in the system who will be most affected by the results of school improvement efforts — to participate in the work. One way to access student voices is through focus groups. Another is through interviews.

Facilitators of task forces focused on school improvement seek systemwide representation, but don't often ask students — those in the system who will be most affected by the results of school improvement efforts — to participate in the work.

FOCUS GROUPS

Robertson and Hord describe a focus group consisting of 9th-grade students whose actions frustrated their teachers. "Nothing seemed to help," said one teacher. "I found myself questioning whether my choice to teach was a good one" (2008). These teachers learned during a focus group that the transition from middle to high school had challenged these students: "While they [the teachers] had been lamenting the freshmen's failure to plan, missing deadlines, and lack of ability to balance school with work and extracurricular activities, the students were trying to assimilate the conditions of expectations of high school with their limited experiences in middle school" (2008). The 9th-grade teachers emerged from that focus group with new ideas on how to help students with transition from middle school and beyond.

Egg Harbor City School District in New Jersey hosted a focus group for three schools engaged in middle school mathematics reform. About 20 middle school students joined the educators in their workshop. Students were briefed to be honest and sincere about their experiences in mathematics, and they were. They sat in a circle outside of which sat the educators. The facilitator asked students questions the educators had generated:

- What skills would have helped you be better prepared for Algebra I?
- Why is it OK to say "I can't do math" when it's not OK to say that about reading?
- Why is math such an important subject?
- Was there a lesson that stood out for you?
- What outside influences might affect your ability to do math?
- What do you do if you don't know how to solve a problem?
- Do you see any math application in your future?
- What do teachers do that embarrass you?

Their answers were surprising, validating, disconcerting, and sometimes even funny, such as this response from a young man: "Actually," he said, "my gerbil influences me to do my math homework — it's the only time I'm sitting in front of its cage."

At the end of the focus group, students turned their chairs around and chatted in small groups with two or three educators. The ice had been broken, and students were completely candid as educators asked important follow-up questions. The facilitator wrote up the results for everybody.

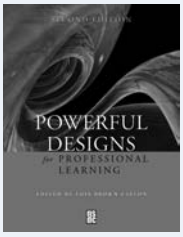
INTERVIEWS

Interviews differ from focus groups in that they occur between one interviewer and one student at a time. Robertson and Hord describe the use of an interview protocol called "Me, Myself, and I" from the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (Laboratory Network Program, 2000). Outside interviewers conducted the interviews, collecting data from a representative sample of students from across the student body. The interviewers collated their notes and compiled "some insights for staff to consider about their students' perceptions."

In a variation on the interview process, educators in Lawrence, N.J., worked with middle school students on how they think about mathematics. These students in pairs did "think-alouds" as they worked

For more strategies

The expanded second edition of *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning* introduces new chapters on classroom walk-throughs, differentiated coaching, dialogue, and video. The book includes a CD with more than 270 pages of handouts, including the tool in this issue of *JSD* on p. 64. Order the book from the NSDC Online Bookstore, http://store.nsdc.org. Item #B380, $64 for members, $80 for nonmembers.



through increasingly more difficult mathematics problems while the teachers listened in. The teachers summarized their notes in answer to these questions:

- What surprised you about students' thinking?
- What errors did you encounter that may have been based on erroneous expectations or assumptions?
- What novel/unique ways of thinking did you encounter?
- What does this experience tell us about what students know and do not know and what they can and cannot do?

TUNING PROTOCOLS

Looking directly at student work gained credibility in the 1970s and 1980s when the National Writers Project (NWP) and others developed processes for assessing writing. These processes were considered valid — they measured real writing, not a proxy, as in multiple-choice items — and reliable — scorers set and used anchors, established rubrics, and scored each paper at least twice to get interscorer reliability. Tuning protocols in part arose from NWP work on formal, large-scale writing assessment. Tuning protocols are as valid as a formal, large-scale assessment process, though less reliable because they rely on consensus rather than calibration.

Tuning protocols engage a group of peer educators in a process to fine-tune what happens in classrooms based on student work. Dave, a high school science teacher, worked with his peers to tune student science portfolios. He wanted to be sure students thought deeply about science. His tuning group pointed out that students mostly wrote about what they did, not what they learned. The consensus of the tuning group was that Dave needed to modify what he asked students to talk about when they debriefed science activities so that they could, in turn, write more about what they learned. Dave used their advice and found that students grew so accustomed to talking about their learning orally that they naturally wrote about their learning in their portfolios. He was delighted to discover that their learning sometimes consisted of more questions than answers.

The result of tuning protocols becomes more meaningful if there is a goal, such as looking at how students demonstrate higher-level thinking skills. Over time and after tuning several pieces of student work, educators will have data that can be used to capture students' levels of thinking. Looking directly at student work through a tuning protocol allows educators to know what students actually know and can do rather than how they select answers on a multiple-choice test.

SOURCES FOR SCHOOL PROCESS DATA

CLASSROOM WALK-THROUGHS

Classroom walk-throughs can yield data about student achievement but are also useful for collecting process data. Process data are essential because they establish what schools are doing to help students learn. In a data-driven dialogue, educators look first at achievement data and then ask: "What are we doing at our school to help students succeed on this skill?"

During the typical classroom walk-through, educators focus on the following: student orientation to work, curriculum moves (content, objectives, context, cognitive type, and calibration to district/state curriculum), and instructional moves. According to Carolyn Downey, educators can also use walk-throughs to gather information on safety and health as well as school or district goals (Downey, 2008).

Many educators "walk the walls" during classroom walk-throughs. As part of their walk-through process, they look at what is posted on classroom walls. They can look at posted student work and gauge what students know and can do from what's on the walls. Sometimes, those doing walk-throughs can — as unobtrusively as possible — look at what students are working on at their desks, again gaining information about what students know and can do.

Margery Ginsberg suggests that those who do walk-throughs consolidate their notes over a period of time to share with an entire faculty (Ginsberg, 2004). For example, they might report that during their visits to classrooms, they observed student work showing a deep understanding of a schoolwide focus, such as five-step problem solving. They might observe students engaged in peer-editing groups and making substantive remarks about organization. Or, they might see students working at their desks using longitude and latitude to determine world locations. These data are as important as test score data about mathematics, writing, and geography.

Classroom walk-throughs can yield data about student achievement but are also useful for collecting process data. Process data are essential because they establish what schools are doing to help students learn.

In terms of school process data, walk-throughs can yield information about student grouping, older students tutoring younger students, class sizes, celebrations of student work, consistent classroom management strategies, whether teachers share rubrics in advance of student work, and how teacher aides work with special needs students in the classroom.

SHADOWING STUDENTS

Shadowing students is an important way to gain process data about a

school. Educators who shadow in their own schools are often amazed at what students endure. For the first time, perhaps, they notice the disconnect among the classes or the variety of classroom expectations that challenge students as they move from class to class. Educators who shadow in other schools can do so for particular purposes, such as to see how a school achieves an interdisciplinary curriculum, but their experience will also help them think about the processes of their own school in comparison to the host school's processes.

The school hosting educators who shadow students needs those adults to report what they see and hear. By doing so, the school benefits from a mirror held up to its own processes. The questions and comments that the adults make to students and staff in a host school are an important source of information about how the school is engaging its learners.

CRITICAL ASPECTS

These professional learning strategies yield little in terms of data collection unless those engaged in them use what they have learned. Participating educators need to note the results of these activities and look for themes, trends, and anomalies to report to the entire school faculty. Mary Dietz suggests that groups keep a portfolio of artifacts related to professional learning — notes from meetings, agendas, student work, summaries of learning, and how educators are applying and implementing what they have learned (Dietz, 2008).

Educators who engage purposefully in these types of professional learning activities diversify their sources of data and develop a more precise understanding of where students struggle.

In addition, educators should seek ways to make data they are gathering accessible to others, perhaps through a web site or blog. Principals might want to set aside part of each faculty meeting for groups to report to each other what they have learned. In fact, student achievement or process data from these professional learning experiences can lead a faculty to the process of inquiry that Carolyn Downey and others suggest. An inquiry question based on data from a classroom walk-through, for example, might sound like this: "When planning units through which we want students to help each other learn, how do we decide on strategies for group work that engage all students?" (Downey, 2008). Faculty engaged in an inquiry question can extend learning beyond the professional learning activity that stimulated it.

Ongoing professional learning activities can naturally generate data that complement data from tests and process data. Educators who engage purposefully in these types of professional learning activities diversify their sources of data and develop a more precise understanding of where students struggle. For example, educators distressed about reading scores in an elementary school can design and engage in an action research project to determine if a particular intervention helps students read better. Teachers can also interview students about reading. The data collected as part of the action research project coupled with interview results can be used with scores on reading tests to make sense of and remedy the situation.

Test scores can launch this key question: "What other data — beyond test scores — do we need? How can we obtain these data without more testing?" The answer leads to professional learning activities that aren't as intrusive as testing. The answer leads to professional learning activities that engage educators in examining real work and understanding real students rather than depending solely on the proxy results that tests provide. The answer leads to professional learning that improves learning for all students.

CONCLUSION

Nutritionists and dieticians argue for well-balanced diets — a little of each food group. Educators need to argue for the same — a little from each type of data source rather than reliance on one data source. Just as fruits and vegetables are considered necessities in the diet, data from real students and real student work accessed through professional learning strategies should become a staple in the data diet.

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TOOLS *of* ENGAGEMENT

SHARING EVIDENCE OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT SPARKS CHANGES IN TEACHER PRACTICE

ANN MINNETT, MIKE MURPHY, SANDY NOBLES, AND TRINA TAYLOR

When visitors tour our classrooms at the J. Erik Jonsson Community School, a 3-year-old through 5th-grade laboratory school just south of downtown Dallas, Texas, they sense that something is different. Visitors remark about the respectful, caring environment of the school and the high-powered instruction, and they want to learn how they can implement these qualities in their own schools.

As part of the research, professional learning, and leadership team at the Jonsson School, we regularly share the work of the Jonsson School with other educators and communicate Jonsson's sim-

ple success formula: Powerful pedagogy + trusting relationships = student engagement for learning

In fall 2006, we grew curious about what the teachers were actually doing in the classroom to elicit this powerful student engagement. We hypothesized that if we could develop a way to collect evidence about student engagement in classrooms and share that evidence with our teachers, they would begin to transform their practices based on what they were learning about their students. Our supposition was supported by NSDC's Standards for Staff Development Data-Driven standard, which reminds us that "the study of such [classroom] evidence is itself a potent means of staff development (NSDC, 2001).

After we visited classrooms using this tool, we intended to talk with participating teachers and share the relationship of their actions to student engagement.

We asked many questions, including: How do Jonsson teachers establish learning relationships with students? What exactly do our teachers do in the classroom to engage their students in learning? How engaged are our students as a result of teachers' actions? Is Jonsson student engagement really related to what they learn? Our questions, the classroom research during the school year 2006-07, and the data and dialogue with participating teachers created a startling exchange of evidence and resulted in changes in teacher practices.

THE DESIGN OF OUR ENGAGEMENT RESEARCH

Our team first needed a tool to use to collect evidence of teacher behaviors and resulting student engagement actions. We culled through research about student learning and engagement and our findings about classroom relationships to study how teachers engage their students in learning. We developed the engagement visit tool (see p. 27) and adopted the teacher actions variables from the Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement program, a set of classroom behaviors found to reduce student achievement disparities (Gottfredson, Marciniak, Birdseye, & Gottfredson, 1995).We intentionally selected from only the positive variables. We were interested in developing a tool that captured what teachers did to engage their students, to establish and maintain a learning relationship.

Actions that we observed

BY THE TEACHER
- Call on individual student
- Latency
- Help
- Delve
- Higher-order question
- Affirm
- Praise
- Reason for praise
- Listen
- Acknowledge feelings
- Proximity (teacher-initiated)
- Courtesy
- Show personal interest
- Touch
- Desist/redirect

BY THE STUDENT
- Raise hand
- Ask (teacher) a question
- Answer teacher's question
- Follow directions
- Proximity (student-initiated)
- Active listening (look at)
- Off-task with peer
- Off-task alone
- Disrupt other student

Another reason for the focus on the positive in classrooms is that we wanted to engage teachers in the reflective process. After we visited classrooms using this tool, we intended to talk with participating teachers and share the relationship of their actions to student engagement. Acknowledging the teacher's strengths and building upon them would, we predicted, strengthen the foundation at our school to regularly share real data about classroom practice. We thought that when the teacher learned that the focus was on how to better engage the students, the more open to change he or she would become and the more changes he or she would voluntarily implement.

Thus, the engagement visit tool contained 15 positive teacher actions. The nine student behaviors on the engagement visit tool reflected our desire to capture positive student behavior toward the teacher and avoid emphasis on negative intent or misbehavior, although we did include off-task and disruptive categories of behavior. The student variables were taken from our collective experience and research in hundreds of classrooms over 30 years.

Our engagement visit tool contained one more component. The student self-rating of engagement tool was adapted from Schlechty's assessment strategies for engaging students in learning. Schlechty defined five levels of student engagement: authentically engaged; ritually engaged (work-

ANN MINNETT is director of research and evaluation, MIKE MURPHY is director of education and professional learning, and TRINA TAYLOR is research specialist at the Salesmanship Club Youth and Family Centers, the sponsoring organization for the J. Erik Jonsson Community School. SANDY NOBLES is principal at the Jonsson School. You can contact them at aminnett@salesmanshipclub.org, mmurphy@salesmanshipclub.org, ttaylor@salesmanshipclub.org, and snobles@jonssonschool.org.

Engagement visit tool

DATE AND TIME

SCHOOL

GRADE SUBJECT

CLASSROOM TEACHER

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY DURING OBSERVATION

Student names					**Notes**
ENGAGING TEACHER ACTIONS AND BEHAVIORS					
Call on student					
Latency 5+					
Help					
Delve					
Higher-level questions and extensions					
Affirmation					
Specific praise					
Listen					
Accept feelings					
Proximity to student (teacher-initiated)					
Seek student ideas, thoughts, opinions					
Courtesy					
Personal interest or connection to student					
Touch					
Desist					
STUDENT ACTIONS AND BEHAVIORS					
Raise hand					
Ask the teacher a question					
Answer teacher's question, respond					
Follow teacher's direction					
Proximity to teacher (student-initiated)					
Active listening to teacher (look at)					
Check in					
Off-task with peer					
Off-task — alone					
Disrupting others					

Teacher addresses whole class (tally):

Additional information:

Source: Salesmanship Club Institute for Excellence in Urban Education, Dallas, Texas

ing for the grade); passively engaged (to avoid negative consequences); actively retreating; and openly rebellious (Schlechty, 2002). We asked students to become involved with our research. We defined these levels in a separate tool so our students could understand the differences and rate themselves on their engagement. (Our research found that children as young as 1st graders were able to indicate their level of engagement on the quick survey and that they did so with greater discrimination than did their teachers or other adult observers.)

Armed with our tools, we were ready to begin our classroom research. The Jonsson Community School is unique in that it employs a classroom researcher who works with the school's sponsoring agency in evaluating the agency's programs. This person would conduct the classroom research, and since she had no evaluative responsibilities over the teachers, the context seemed right for side-by-side research and dialogue. Eight Jonsson teachers volunteered for the research project over the course of the school year.

All of the teachers were eager to learn what the classroom researcher had seen in their classrooms. To facilitate this, the researcher shared copies of the tallied tools with each teacher.

THE INVITATION

We shared all materials and procedures with the participating teachers before observing in the classroom, and they understood that they would receive copies of their data and that we expected them to use the information for reflection about their practices. The classroom researcher visited each classroom prior to formal observations to help teachers and students feel more comfortable with her in the classroom. Student buy-in was also important. The classroom researcher arranged with the teacher to have five to 10 minutes of class time to discuss project details with the class, and she enlisted the teacher to join her in presenting the project to students.

J. Erik Jonsson Community School
Dallas, Texas

Grades: Pre-K-5
Enrollment: 232
Staff: 23
Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	3%
Black:	2%
Hispanic:	94%
Asian/Pacific Islander:	0%
Native American:	0%
Other:	1%

Limited English proficient: 64%
Languages spoken: English and Spanish
Free/reduced lunch: 77%
Contact: Mike Murphy, director of education and professional learning, Salesmanship Club Youth and Family Centers
E-mail: mmurphy@salesmanshipclub.org

WHAT WE FOUND

Over the school year, our classroom researcher observed all students and teachers in the eight 1st- through 5th-grade classes, five times for each student in each class. Since the relationship between the teacher actions and student behaviors was at the core of our research questions, our researcher deliberately selected four random students per session to target for observation and documented their behaviors with the teacher and classmates for 15 minutes each time, regardless of what they were doing. This practice ensured that the researcher wouldn't focus on students who were acting out or displaying disruptive behavior in the classroom.

THE EVIDENCE

Our multiple classroom observations, tallies from the engagement tools, and subsequent exchanges with participating teachers revealed the following evidence:

- Students as young as 1st grade were able to identify their levels of interest in classroom activities, and all Jonsson students were engaged about 90% of the time.
- All positive student behaviors were related to teachers calling on them and calling them by name in a conversational manner and in close proximity.
- Students' positive behaviors were highly correlated with the teacher's affirmation and listening to their students.
- Teachers engaged students at close range — teacher-initiated proximity to a student was correlated with the student's active listening, asking and answering questions, and positive self-ratings of engagement.
- Teachers successfully managed and minimized students' off-task behavior at close range, with light touch, using the student's name, and with redirection.
- Both teachers and students were regularly more active and more engaged in their work during morning hours than in the afternoon.

THE EXCHANGE

These data are interesting, but the process of feedback and teacher reflection was the most important component of our research. All of the teachers were eager to learn what the classroom researcher had seen in their classrooms. To facilitate this, the researcher shared copies of the tallied tools with each teacher. Each tool showing teacher actions and student behaviors painted a picture of interactions and behaviors during that particular observation segment and provided the foundation for each exchange between researcher and teacher.

We learned so much from the teachers about how to exchange this

evidence. Teachers needed to receive the information when they were free from teaching responsibilities and could reflect on what it meant. We also felt that the immediacy of the feedback was crucial. Teachers were provided the evidence of student engagement in a face-to-face meeting later in the same observation day, or at the very least, at the end of each week of classroom observations.

To assist in using the tools for reflection, we set up discussion mechanisms. A discussion board on the school's intranet site was valuable in addition to a question-and-answer box in the teacher workroom for anonymous suggestions. By far, the face-to-face exchange was the most important part of the learning. The classroom researcher learned that teachers needed time to mull over the tallied tools, noting patterns of marks for student behaviors and their own behaviors toward students. The researcher was not in a hurry to force conclusions. She found that by asking teachers to reflect on what they saw in the tools, teachers would naturally respond to the data, ask questions, and wonder what would happen if they changed their behaviors. The classroom researcher used a menu of questions to delve into the teachers' reflections:

- What was going on during this time?
- How, if at all, do you behave differently toward students of varying ethnicity?
- Is there more behavior toward one gender?
- Is there more interaction with high-achieving students than others?
- How does time of day relate to your teacher-student interactions?
- How does your student grouping (individual seatwork, small groups, whole class) affect your behavior toward students?
- Are students of all ethnic groups equally engaged in classroom activities?
- How do the students' self-ratings of engagement relate to their behavior toward you?
- What's happening in the classroom when students go off-task?
- Given this information, what would you want to do to more consistently engage your students?

POSITIVE CHANGES

The participating teachers flooded our leadership team and the classroom researcher with ideas and additional questions after reflecting on the data. These reflections formed the ground-

work for concrete changes in practice to enhance student engagement in classrooms. Over time, we found that participating teachers began to adjust their actions to gain more student engagement, a trend reinforced by subsequent observations of these teachers. Indeed, the most rewarding part of our work came toward the end of the school year, when we worked with four Jonsson teachers who wanted more specific information about what had happened in their classrooms. Here are two brief stories that describe how two teachers used the research to further their own learning.

Over time, we found that participating teachers began to adjust their actions to gain more student engagement, a trend reinforced by subsequent observations of these teachers.

Rachel, a 3rd-grade teacher, was challenged by two students' behaviors in her class. They made good grades, but our observations noted that they were often off-task and that Rachel rarely acknowledged them or redirected their behavior. When Rachel reviewed the coding sheets from her room, she was genuinely surprised by those students' actions, and she noticed that both students were distracting other students. When the researcher returned in a month to observe again, she found that not only was the teacher more responsive to both students in all aspects of their behavior, but the students rated themselves as more engaged in the classroom activities, and their behavior was more controlled.

Another teacher, Ted, was not convinced that student engagement was really connected to student learning, which was one of our original questions. Ted thought that his 2nd graders' ratings of their own levels of engagement were inaccurate and were not related to their learning, so the classroom researcher collaborated with him to investigate his question. Ted conducted four geography lessons, and our team collected the students' ratings of their engagement in each lesson. Immediately following the lesson, each student answered three questions about content, and our team correlated the levels of engagement with the students' scores. Sure enough, those who were more engaged made better grades on the quizzes. And now Ted believes not only the data about frequencies of actions, but that students' self-ratings have merit.

We now call our system of engagement tools and facilitated feedback the Engagement Exchange, reflecting the critical role the exchange of the evidence plays in teacher practice transformation. During the 2007-08 school year, we have continued to use our student engagement tools in classrooms at the Jonsson Community School and in three other schools in the Dallas area. We have gained important information as to how our teachers engage students. More importantly, we have discovered a powerful device to encourage teachers to recognize and own their student engagement practices. A simple tool used to collect data about the relationship between teacher actions and student behaviors coupled with facilitated feedback and the creation of a feedback stream have encouraged teachers to continue to wonder about their own practice and nurtured evidence-based changes for students.

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TEXAS SCHOOL BEATS THE ODDS WITH A SHARED COMMITMENT TO STUDENT LEARNING

BY TIMOTHY BERKEY
AND ELIZABETH DOW

The odds were stacked against the new elementary school from the beginning. In its favor, the school was a beautiful building with an established principal. Beyond that, anyone would predict that the first year would be tough. The staff consisted of new teachers and transfers from across the district. The students were reassigned from two neighboring elementary schools and represented the lower-performing populations of each. Some of the older students were involved in gangs. From the outset, they were determined to bring the same behaviors they displayed in their previous schools. Was it fate that this new school was named after William C. Velasquez, founder of a youth organization aimed at social

action, a visionary, and a leader of Mexican-American youth?

One year after opening its doors, Velasquez Elementary School in Richmond, Texas, beat the odds in 2007 and was designated an Exemplary School, the highest award given to schools in Texas for outstanding academic results.

A CONTRACT FOR EMPOWERMENT

The faculty who had chosen to become part of the new staff had a common motivation. They wanted to be part of something different. They turned to Elizabeth Dow, their new principal (and co-author of this article), for a vision, and she responded with a challenge. She asked her teachers what it would take to create a campus where every student experienced success.

The resulting conversations focused on the need for strong relationships and the empowerment of every professional. In an August retreat, teachers created a social contract that became the foundation for a culture of mutual respect and unified effort. Words and phrases such as "willing to share" and "team player" were written into the document, not as empty promises, but as commitments to relationships that would empower every professional and build a collaborative culture.

A BATTLE OF WILLS

The opening days were difficult for the staff. Fights broke out in hallways and students from opposing schools bullied each other and disrupted classrooms. Dow was determined to win the battle over the type of school Velasquez was to become, so she modeled what she wanted to see. She didn't suspend students, but instead held them accountable for their behavior. Staff addressed misbehaviors with an immediate consequence given out of love, not dislike. Students were shaped, not labeled. Teachers joined together and patrolled hallways, demonstrating that the new school would be controlled by adults, not by students with a history of disrupting classrooms.

Within weeks, the atmosphere at Velasquez was changing and the culture aligning with what we know is an essential baseline for an effective school — a safe and orderly environment. Parents who in the past had fought attempts by their previous school to discipline their children were now handed expectations of a new partnership. They also were given a promise: "Your child will not fail."

Velasquez Elementary School
Richmond, Texas

Grades: Pre-K-5
Enrollment: 622
Staff (certified teachers and support staff): 49
Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	31%
Black:	26%
Hispanic:	41%
Asian/Pacific Islander:	0%
Native American:	0%
Other:	2%

Limited English proficient: 16%
Languages spoken: English, Spanish
Special education: 8%
Free/reduced lunch: 56%
Contact: Elizabeth Dow, principal
E-mail: edow@lcisd.org

THE VISION: TOGETHER WE CAN

As the staff and administration settled into the school year and examined students' academic records, they saw that they had a larger battle to face — that over expectations. Based on past performance on state assessments, the staff doubted their students could make significant gains in time to pass the state assessments in the spring. Students were accustomed to failing and feeling the weight of low expectations. Yet teachers experienced a new sense of efficacy in coming to terms with their out-of-control school. They learned that by working together, they could change the course of events. Some believed that if they pooled their talents as teachers, a majority of students could pass the state assessments.

Dow raised the stakes even higher. Her motto: "100% of 100%." When a veteran teacher told her that she was sure that the majority of her class would fail the state reading test, Dow showed up at her door the next day ready to teach. The staff expected all children to succeed. Teachers' learning and sharing together would become a primary vehicle for improvement.

USING DATA TO BEAT THE ODDS

Rick Stiggins (Stiggins, Arter, Chappuis, & Chappuis, 2005) reminds us that if you want to build a culture of confident learners, you must gather data that is analyzed in the right manner to inform teachers and improve learning. This is exactly what the staff at Velasquez has learned to do, beginning with Monday morning strategy sessions. The week begins with a core team that gathers for a block of time in the school's "war room."

The principal, assistant principal, counselor, and instructional technologist meet with three veteran teachers assigned full time as the reading facili-

TIMOTHY BERKEY is chair of graduate studies and assistant professor of educational leadership at the University of Houston-Victoria. He has been a principal of three Blue Ribbon high schools and received the Those Who Excel Award from the Illinois Board of Education. You can contact him at berkeyt@uhv.edu.

ELIZABETH DOW is principal of Velasquez Elementary School in the Lamar Consolidated Independent School District in suburban Houston. She also serves as an adjunct instructor at the University of Houston-Victoria and works in partnership with UHV to train future school leaders. You can contact her at edow@lcisd.org.

How Velasquez shifted its use of data

CHALLENGE	STRATEGY
Reliance on state assessments that measure minimum expectations.	• Teachers design formative and summative assessments based on higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. • Students are given standardized tests that are based on national standards.
Accountability is limited to the results of state assessments and rating of the campus.	• Accountability is attached to weekly performance data issued on each student by teams of teachers.
Formative data on the progress of students are collected and held by the teacher to whom the student is assigned.	• Students are assigned to a team of teachers, and data are shared by all.
Data reveals that students continue to struggle after several attempts to remediate.	• Student data is shared with a core team in order to find new strategies and solicit intervention support from others.
Students leave school frustrated with their learning (nonmastery) or bored (mastery).	• Teachers use formative data from the day's lesson to design corrective instruction for nonmastery students and advanced activities for mastery students. The last 30 minutes of the day is used for remediation or advanced learning activities.
Leadership limits their involvement with data to state assessment results and report cards.	• The principal and assistant principal serve on the core team and review weekly data on individual students and directly participate in the identification and delivery of intervention strategies.

tator, Title I coordinator, and math/science Title I instructor. This core team has one purpose: to brainstorm a set of strategies and interventions for every child identified in the previous week's grade-level meetings as struggling. The team develops strategies that it will take back to teachers to address the learning problems of each child.

The room looks like organized chaos. Charts and data tables are posted all over the walls. Diagrams and curriculum maps prepared by each team of teachers provide visual displays of key objectives that will be addressed through cross-curricular teaming. One member of the core team takes detailed minutes of the strategy sessions.

GATHERING THE RIGHT TYPE OF DATA

For years, Wiggins and McTighe (1998) have promoted their backward design process for planning curriculum. Planning starts with identifying the desired student learning results. The challenge under No Child Left Behind is that many states have set standards too low. Sanders (2003) points out that "especially for schools serving disadvantaged populations of students, we have observed too often that students whose achievement was above the proficiency level had suppressed academic gains." Texas is one of those states. This was a paradigm shift for Velasquez teachers as they began to view the state assessments as a minimum standard instead of an academic goal.

Velasquez now uses a combination of common formative and summative assessments in addition to state-released practice tests. The school recently introduced the Stanford 10 assessments to get a more accurate external audit of proficiency levels than the state TAKS tests provide. Teachers get weekly assessment data that is disaggregated and easy to use in monitoring the progress of each student.

INTERVENTIONS AND STRATEGIES

Well-intentioned use of data can often lead nowhere. People get together and talk about results, and not much follows. This is not the case at Velasquez. Each pair of K-1, 2-3, and 4-5 grade-level teams has a representative who works with the core team to implement the interventions and strategies identified from the Monday morning sessions.

Specialists from the core team visit classrooms and co-teach the interventions. The instructional technologist designs special assignments and lesson supplements using technologies in the classrooms to support

differentiation of content, processes, and assessments that target student learning problems profiled from the previous week's data.

Unsuccessful interventions are reported to the core team and redesigned for the following week. The staff never accepts failure. Differentiation, time, and teamwork are the variables. Learning is the constant.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Every seventh day at Velasquez, teachers have a two-hour block for shared learning and practice. The social contract developed and revised at the beginning of each school year is the foundation for these meetings. The meetings are intense and structured. A portion of the time is focused on book study to enhance the skills of the team. For much of the meeting, the teams focus on data from teacher-developed student assessments and state-released assessments.

Team members plan for the differentiation of lessons beginning with agreed-upon standards. They separate these into levels so that students at the bottom are pulled up and those in the middle and upper levels are pushed ahead. Teachers chart out six weeks of planned lessons at a time to take advantage of cross-curricular opportunities to enhance learning through shared practice.

USING DATA TO MAINTAIN A FOCUS ON STUDENTS

Teachers are focused on individual progress of students and pay close attention to data that allow them to identify struggling students. Teachers use a 45-minute conference period once a week to compile a profile of students for review by the core team the following Monday morning. Teachers disaggregate data from the week's formative assessments to target students in trouble for discussion and intervention strategies.

COMMON LEARNING TIME

Every Wednesday afternoon, Velasquez teachers gather for a one-hour meeting at the end of the workday. On one Wednesday, teachers in vertical teams coordinate their work on curriculum, instruction, and assessments. On the alternate Wednesday, teachers share their work in whole-campus faculty meetings, and vertical teams report on their activities. Dow also uses this time as one of many opportunities to celebrate team accomplishments and student success stories.

Teachers agree that no one will address personal needs (doctor's appointments, family obligations, etc.) on Wednesday afternoons. How does Velasquez get this type of commitment? Dow's teachers know that she will stretch the rules and help them with personal needs and family obligations on other days of the week in return for their unwavering commitment to students.

EVERY DAY ENDS WITH CONFIDENCE

Students end each day with a 30-minute session customized to meet their learning needs. Teachers provide tutorials for students needing corrective interventions to reach mastery. For students already mastering the day's objectives, teachers provide learning activities that stretch their skills to higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

This happens through an intricate series of discussions throughout the day among grade-level teachers and core interventionists, who share, observe, strategize, and design learning experiences that will enable each student to finish the school day with a high level of personal satisfaction and confidence in learning.

It is no accident that the attendance rate at Velasquez is high. Students are challenged and know that their teachers will help them find success before getting on the bus.

WHAT IT TAKES TO TEACH AT VELASQUEZ

Dow makes clear what she wants for her students: "I don't want good teachers. I want great ones." When she interviews job candidates, she asks if they can be a team player. Success at Velasquez is built on a culture of teacher collaboration and mutual respect, and by constantly asking, "Is this what is best for children?"

Communication is a critical component among teachers, and staff must exchange data throughout the day. Students are assigned to a team of teachers, not a single adult, and teachers leave their egos in the parking lot. When parents new to the school express concern about this nontraditional approach, Dow takes them by the hand and pledges, "I love your child, and I promise she will get the best education at our school."

Students at Velasquez are the winners, and their teachers earn an intrinsic reward that no one but struggling children who succeed can offer — confident smiles and renewed excitement about learning.

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IT'S NOT JUST *ANY* DAY

When the sun rises on D-Day at one rural district, educators meet to disaggregate the data

BY LISA D. BECK

No Child Left Behind brought with it a barrage of data from standardized tests. But when do teachers have time to analyze student data? The first days of school are hectic preparing classrooms, organizing supplies, learning the names on class rosters, and completing mounds of paperwork. To give teachers time and support to learn from student data to improve practice, Boone County Schools in West Virginia initiated D-Day — a day for data disaggregation before the beginning of each school year.

Coming together for a day outside their regular contract, teachers in this small rural school system strategically reviewed test results and developed plans of action for the new school term to address individual and schoolwide strengths and challenges. For three years, student achievement scores have shown steady gains.

For school systems to improve student achievement for all children, the foundation on which NCLB was written, teachers and administrators need time to disaggregate student data (the process of analyzing the data for distinct subgroups of student population) to make instructional decisions and plans. Federal legislation requires schools to disaggregate achievement data on the following variables: major racial and ethnic groups, English language proficiency status, students with disabilities as compared to all other students, and economically disadvantaged students as compared to all other students (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

LISA D. BECK is assistant superintendent at Boone County Schools in West Virginia. You can contact her at ldbeck@access.k12.wv.us.

Test scores are up as a result of D-Day.

COUNTYWIDE SUPPORT FOR D-DAY

D-Day is scheduled for five days in August in various locations across the county. Teachers are notified of their school's D-Day before the end of the school year to allow them to schedule vacation and other plans

around their assigned day. Schools are grouped by similar grade levels and student populations so that staffs from similar school zones or feeder areas can work together and compare school practices and initiatives. All central office county improvement team members, including the superintendent, attend all five D-Day sessions to demonstrate the importance of data disaggregation and instructional planning.

D-Day costs the school system an average day's wage for each professional attending the work session (approximately $75,000). With 50% of the district's student population in the low socioeconomic status subgroup (students receiving free or reduced lunch) and 24% also in the students with disabilities category for accountability, the benefits in student achievement and planning for instruction far outweigh the expense.

Participation in D-Day is optional. Fifty-five percent of school-level teachers and administrators attended the first year. By the third year, attendance rose to 70%. The opportunity to analyze student test results collaboratively and to identify strengths and challenges is compelling. We engage in conversations about how the purpose of reviewing data is to gain insight into how to help students achieve their full potential. We discuss both legal (NCLB) and moral reasons for changing our beliefs and classroom practices. We ask two questions of all D-Day participants: Do you believe that you control the conditions that will result in student success? And do you believe that given the time and conditions, all children, regardless of race, disability, gender, or socioeconomic status, will learn essential skills?

The district believes that "disaggregation is not a problem-solving strategy, but a problem-finding strategy" (Lezotte, 2001, p. 85). This belief is reflected in the Boone County school improvement plan, in which all curriculum/instructional decisions are based on sound research and practices. Before the first D-Day took place, administrators and teachers from across the county studied books and articles to learn about best practices and research that influence student achievement. Staff members studied *Assembly Required: A Continuous School Improvement System* (Effective Schools Products, 2001), *Classroom Instruction That Works* (ASCD, 2001), and *Closing the Achievement Gap: No Excuses* (APQC, 2002). Principals and administrative leaders attended several state and national conferences to gain a greater understanding of the importance of analyzing student data.

During the winter before the first D-Day, Patricia Davenport was a guest speaker in our school district. She described her former school district's (Brazosport, Texas) eight-step process for closing the achievement gap to all professional staff members. The steps include:

1. Data disaggregation
2. Timeline development
3. Instructional focus
4. Assessment
5. Tutorials
6. Enrichment
7. Maintenance
8. Monitoring

By studying these education leaders together, the district established a common vocabulary and level of knowledge to ready all staff to carefully use student data.

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

Each D-Day begins with a continental breakfast and a welcome from the superintendent. School personnel

Stoplight highlighting

COLOR	% CORRECT	SIGNAL
Green	75% or above	Go
Yellow	50% to 74%	Caution
Red	Less than 50%	Stop

Teachers use three highlighter markers (green, yellow, and red) to simulate the three colors of a traffic light. Each item or standard on the test report is marked according to the percent correct.

Test items scoring 75% or above are highlighted in green, signifying "go" or "great job" in teaching the concept. Teachers are able to see that the objective was a strength for the class. Scores of 50% to 74% are highlighted in yellow, signifying "caution" or "slow down" because students performed marginally on the standards.

Finally, any standard receiving a score of less than 50% is highlighted in red, signifying that teachers need to stop and rethink how to meet this objective. Teachers are able to see the area as a challenge for their students. Do I need to revise my instructional strategies? How could I have done a better job in teaching this concept?

Boone County Schools
Madison, W. Va.

Number of schools: 15
Grades: Pre-K-12
Enrollment: 4,609
Staff: 300
Racial/ethnic mix:
White: 99%
Other: 1%
Free/reduced lunch: 49.7%
Special education: 24%
Contact: Lisa Beck
E-mail: ldbeck@access.k12.wv.us

are seated by either department or grade levels and have all the materials they need for the day's work. School leaders share the district's fundamental beliefs about data, then the educators get to work.

Together, the large group looks at countywide test results. Then teachers receive copies of most recent student test scores and worksheets for recording their findings. Smaller groups analyze data through a strategy called "stoplight highlighting." (See chart on p. 36.)

Stoplight highlighting is an effective visual to evaluate strengths and weaknesses. Teachers compare their green, yellow, and red highlights with their colleagues. These conversations are the most useful part of the day.

Teachers from different schools compare test scores and quiz one another on how they taught various concepts. For example, at one session, Diane Bolyard, an 8th-grade math teacher at Madison Middle School, celebrated with a fellow math teacher. "Last year, I had more yellow and red under the fractions standard. This year, I have more green," she said.

After lunch, teachers complete two more tasks using stoplight highlighting results. They record their strengths, concerns, and challenges, and meet in their school groups for reflection. They share commonalities and plan focus calendars for the first few months of school. Through their alignment of instruction to the state content standards and objectives and choosing effective instructional strategies, teachers are empowered to make a difference in classroom instruction. The emphasis on Bloom's Taxonomy throughout the district has allowed teachers to focus on higher-order thinking skills and pulled them away from the lower-level (recall, define, identify) style of questions found on standardized tests. After working through D-Day,

each participant leaves with a folder of disaggregated data and a framework for teaching in the coming school term.

POSITIVE OUTCOMES

As a result of D-Day, not only are test scores rising in Boone County (see chart at right), but teacher morale is as well. While teachers were at first affected negatively by the strict legislative mandates and policy structure of NCLB, they are encouraged to see students mastering content and grade-level standards. They have had time to analyze test results and make instructional plans before the first bus rolls down Route 119 to pick up students for the new school term.

After the second year of D-Day, teachers were prepared to analyze other sets of data besides the end-of-year summative assessment. The local school district began administering benchmarks twice a year so that teachers could see a snapshot of student performance. The county administration scores the benchmarks and returns them to the classroom teacher within 48 hours. This quick turnaround allows teachers to analyze this new set of data and to make curricular decisions to best meet student needs.

With D-Day, teachers have had time to analyze test results and make instructional plans before the first bus rolls down Route 119 to pick up students for the new school term.

In addition, students are taking ownership in their assessment results. Each year, school personnel hold conferences with individual students to review test results using the stoplight highlighting strategy. Students highlight their strengths and weaknesses and are asked to set goals for the new school term.

Many schools have instituted goal notebooks and refer to them throughout the year so that students can assess personal progress. At Ramage Elementary School in Danville, a pre-K through grade 5 school with 275 students, students keep electronic student portfolios. Their personal and academic goals are kept on file, and students monitor their yearly progress with charts and graphs. The 5th-grade teachers wrote a grant and all students carry their electronic portfolios on flash drives purchased with grant monies.

Participants agree on the value of D-Day for improving teaching and learning. Brenda Viars, principal of Sherman Elementary in Comfort, a consolidated elementary school with 550 students in grades pre-K through 6, asked the board of education to allow central office staff to continue offering D-Days before the beginning of each school year. Although an extra expense to the school system, "it is an invaluable day of planning, staff development, and data disaggregation," she said. The time has never been given to teachers in the past for them to analyze student test data. "It makes the start of school so much more productive and allows us to align our school goals to student achievement," Viars said.

Barbara Deal, NCLB Title I teacher at Sherman Elementary, told the board that "D-Day sets the tone for the entire school year. Staff and administration know from day one what needs to be accomplished to improve student achievement." Her colleague, Lisa Lowe, said, "I can't envision beginning the school year without the information I receive on D-Day. It maps the curriculum for the entire school year." Sherman Elementary has moved from a school listed as failing to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) to being named a West Virginia School of Excellence for 2006. The results are in: Finding time to share test data with teachers and administrators before the beginning of the new school term has become a route to victory for Boone County Schools.

Test scores rise in Boone County Schools

YEAR	READING % PROFICIENT			MATH % PROFICIENT		
	ALL	LOW-INCOME	SPECIAL EDUCATION	ALL	LOW-INCOME	SPECIAL EDUCATION
2004	74.1	66.5	32.1	61.5	53.4	26.6
2005	77.5	69.7	38.9	70.7	62.9	38.8
2006	78.7	70.6	40.9	73.9	66.1	41.9
2007	79.0	72.0	41.9	74.0	66.3	41.1

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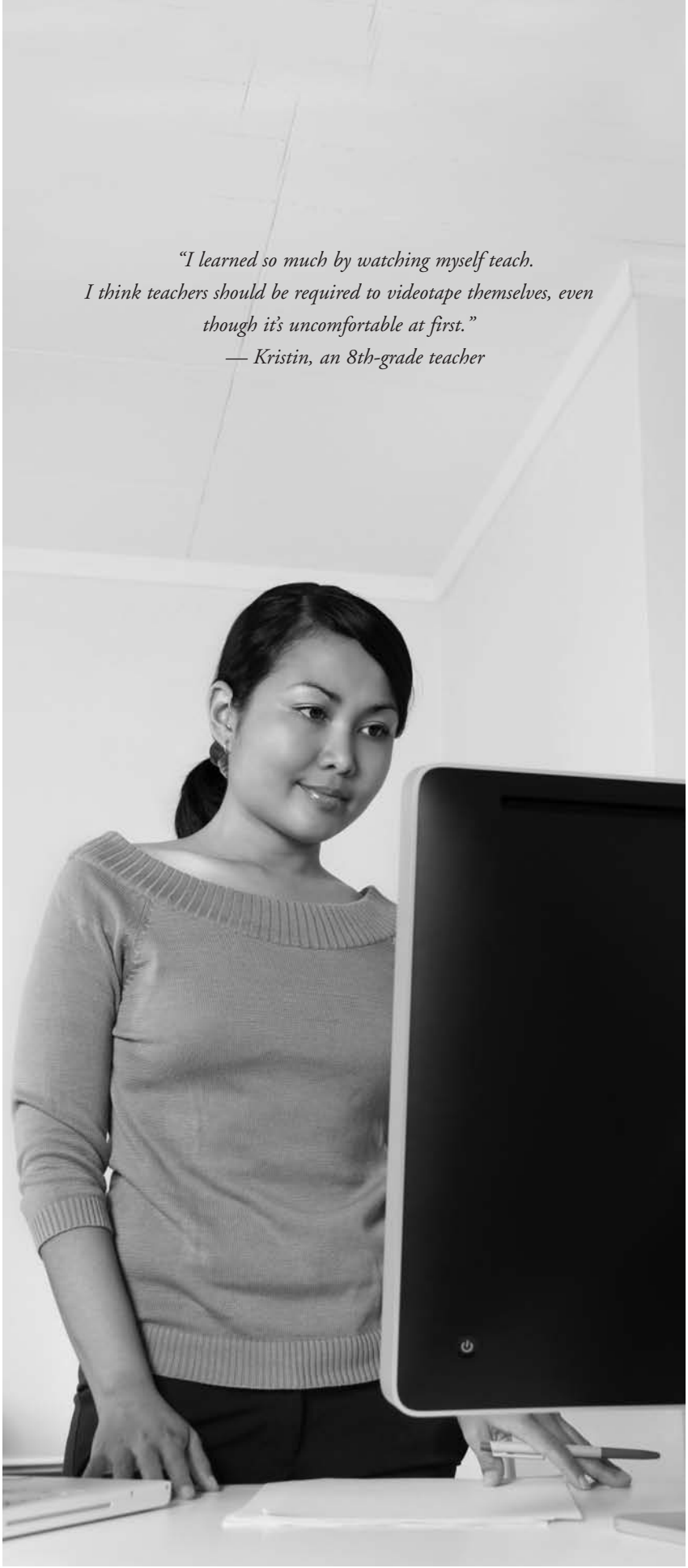

"I learned so much by watching myself teach. I think teachers should be required to videotape themselves, even though it's uncomfortable at first."
— Kristin, an 8th-grade teacher

A lesson in teaching, starring you

BY TOM J. McCONNELL, MEILAN ZHANG, MATT J. KOEHLER, MARY A. LUNDEBERG, MARK URBAN-LURAIN, JOYCE M. PARKER, AND JAN EBERHARDT

When teachers work toward the goal of using evidence of student learning to improve teaching, they typically use test scores, student work, portfolios, and a variety of formative assessments. Videotapes of teaching are another valuable form of evidence. Research has shown that analysis of videotaped teaching cases is effective in promoting teacher learning (Finn, 2002; Roth & Chen, 2007; Sherin & van Es, 2005) because of its ability to help teachers

notice and recall evidence not easily captured in other data sources. In this article, we share an example of professional learning in which teachers use video to support their professional learning. Our research suggests that teachers who use videotaped records are more likely to make instructional decisions based on evidence.

PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

The Problem-Based Learning Project for Teachers (McConnell, Eberhardt, et al., 2008) is a National Science Foundation-funded program at Michigan State University that is developing and studying a model of science teacher professional development that promotes teachers' use of evidence in revisions they make to their practice. Participants use problem-based learning as an analytic strategy for understanding and solving real-world problems. Problem-based learning provides a systematic approach that allows learners to identify what they know or need to know, then develop hypotheses and carry out research about solutions as they construct new ideas about the problem (Delisle, 1997).

When teachers analyze videos of their own teaching, they identify the lens that best fits their question and analyze the clips using a series of teacher-developed questions that direct their attention to relevant events.

A key principle guiding the design of the Problem-Based Learning Project is to position teachers as reflective practitioners (National Research Council, 1996) who examine a variety of data about the impact of their practice on student learning. Participating teachers meet in a summer workshop to learn science content, plan science units based on relevant standards, and identify issues related to their unit for study and analysis during the following academic year. These questions and the teachers' hypotheses about the impact of specific strategies guide research about their practice. Examples of the types of questions teachers developed include:

- Which formative assessment strategies help me identify misconceptions?
- How can I use productive questions to help students develop independence as learners?
- Can student journals improve students' retention of concepts?
- What is the most effective strategy for grouping students during lab activities?

(Stanaway, Parker, McConnell, & Eberhardt, 2008).

Data collected as part of their research includes videotaped records of activities from the classroom.

During the school year, participants implement their units and analyze evidence of student learning. Only a few of the participants have had prior experience with video as a tool for professional development, so a team of experienced teachers and teacher educators provide support for this new form of learning. The summer workshop includes practice in using video camcorders to capture evidence in the classroom and iMovie video editing software to review tapes and compile segments that address their research questions. Teachers also practice analyzing video cases using one of four "lenses" (content, assessment, student interactions, and instructional decisions) that help them focus on evidence related to their research questions.

When teachers analyze videos of their own teaching, they identify the lens that best fits their question and analyze the clips using a series of teacher-developed questions that direct their attention to relevant events. For instance, a teacher interested in structuring student interactions that engage all her students would use a video camcorder with an external boom microphone to record group interactions during a lab. As she reviews the tape, she would record her observations and inferences about the level of participation, as well as the nature of the interactions within student teams. Teachers are provided analysis guides, organizational tools, and iMovie tutorials to use as they view the tapes of their science units. These tools are included in a Participant Guide for Teacher Research (Problem-Based Learning Project for Teachers, 2007).

After her initial analysis, she would share selected clips with a learning community of four to six project participants. These groups

TOM J. McCONNELL is an assistant professor of biology education at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind. You can contact him at tjmcconnell@bsu.edu.

MEILAN ZHANG is a research associate in the Division of Science and Mathematics Education, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Mich. You can contact her at zhangme@msu.edu.

MATT J. KOEHLER is an associate professor in the College of Education, Michigan State University. You can contact him at mkoehler@msu.edu.

MARY A. LUNDEBERG is a professor in the College of Education at Michigan State University. You can contact her at mlunde@msu.edu.

MARK URBAN-LURAIN is the director of instructional technology research & development for the Division of Science and Mathematics Education at Michigan State University. You can contact him at urban@msu.edu.

JOYCE M. PARKER is a science education instructor in the Division of Science and Mathematics Education at Michigan State University. You can contact her at parker13@msu.edu.

JAN EBERHARDT is assistant director of the Division of Science and Mathematics Education, Michigan State University. You can contact her at eberhar3@msu.edu.

meet monthly to collaboratively analyze evidence relating to the issues they identified during the summer workshop. With help from a project facilitator, the learning community then uses the teacher's lens to discuss the clips, identifies learning issues related to the hypotheses, searches for literature about the issues, and synthesizes a new hypothesis about a strategy for promoting group work that could be implemented in an upcoming science lesson.

THE IMPACT OF VIDEO-BASED REFLECTION

Our research supports the use of videotaped records. In the first year of the project, half of the participants in each group were asked to use videos to support analysis of their dilemmas. The other half used student work and test scores as the basis of their analysis.

Comparison of the two groups included pre- and post-assessments using the Science Teaching Efficacy Beliefs Instrument survey (Riggs & Enochs, 1990). The teachers who used video showed a significantly greater increase in their science teaching efficacy than those who did not use videos. In order to identify how the use of video may have led to this difference, group presentations were analyzed to look for patterns in how teachers' reflections differed if they used videotaped records (Rosaen, Lundeberg, Cooper, & Kauer, 2006).

Teachers who used video based a significantly larger proportion of their analytical reflections on evidence, including samples of student work, test scores, and videotaped records. Teachers who did not use videos based their reflections on evidence less than half as often as those who used video, basing most of their reflections on subjective feelings, inferences, or memories (McConnell, Lundeberg, et al., 2008).

Project participants have also said that using videotaped records to support practice has led to changes in their teaching practice. These changes include increased use of formative assessment strategies, student journals, and portfolios. Tina, a 6th-grade teacher, discovered that students use their journals and notes more often when the lesson includes design activities that allow students to test, revise, and retest their plans, such as building a roller coaster to understand force and motion. After revising her unit, she found that her students were better able to retain and use the science concepts from the roller coaster activity in other contexts.

A CLASSROOM EXAMPLE

Kristin is an 8th-grade science teacher in a small rural district in Michigan. She has been teaching science for six years, and her principal regards her as an exemplary teacher. In her second year with the Problem-Based Learning Project, she developed a unit about cellular respiration. Her teaching dilemma focused on helping students apply their knowledge to real-world situations.

In the presentation to her learning community, Kristin focused on one group of four girls in the class. The group had earned an A on the assignment, answering questions thoroughly and accurately applying the science concepts to the problem. When Kristin checked on the group, all four members were able to answer questions. She was confident they were discussing the assignment. However, her analysis of the video showed that all four members of the group were working alone, only functioning as a group when the teacher was near. She shared a clip that showed the girls turning away from each other and individually writing answers the moment Kristin walked away from the group.

Later test scores confirmed that two of the girls were not able to explain how cellular respiration related to the body's need for energy. Only by viewing a videotape of the activity did Kristin notice the lack of collaboration in the group. As Kristin stated in her presentation to the group, "I never would have seen what the groups were doing without the video. I was just too busy teaching to see it." Kristin has since implemented team-building activities to help her students learn the different roles they play within groups. She has also implemented a variety of assessment instruments to encourage individual accountability for learning content. Finally, she developed new group tasks that are more complex, requiring more teamwork to complete successfully.

During interviews and focus group discussions, many of the teachers revealed that they were fearful about appearing in a video that was being critiqued by others, but said that reviewing the videos allowed them to observe their teaching from a new point of view, like "having a mirror placed in my face" (Lundeberg, Koehler, Zhang, McConnell, & Eberhardt, 2008). They were able to "see things that you don't notice when you are teaching the lesson." One veteran 5th-grade teacher has learned to use video as a primary source of data for improving her practice: "Thinking about the things I chose to ask, the sequence in which I asked them, the student responses, and how I responded to students, picking that apart is hard to do after the fact unless you have the video."

Teachers who used video based a significantly larger proportion of their analytical reflections on evidence, including samples of student work, test scores, and videotaped records. Teachers who did not use videos based their reflections on evidence less than half as often as those who used video, basing most of their reflections on subjective feelings, inferences, or memories.

Another participant wrote, "Wow! I saw so much when I viewed my tape. I found this to be the most powerful assessment."

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Steps that can encourage teachers to create and use videotaped records include ensuring that videos will be used for teacher learning, not for teacher evaluation. We also learned that teachers need support in learning how to analyze their own videos, in the form of sample questions to consider in their analysis and a chance to practice the analytical process on videotaped cases of other teachers.

School districts can support teachers' use of video by providing access to equipment and training in the use of video cameras and simple editing software. Our experience suggests that most teachers can learn to use video technology quickly when there is a need to know how to operate the equipment. District leaders can also provide support by creating time and opportunities for teachers to analyze evidence in collaborative learning communities.

Videotapes of classroom practice can give teachers a new window to important evidence of learning that they may otherwise never see.

In our efforts to help teachers adjust and refine their practice, we need to encourage the use of all relevant sources of data. Videotapes of classroom practice can give teachers a new window to important evidence of learning that they may otherwise never see.

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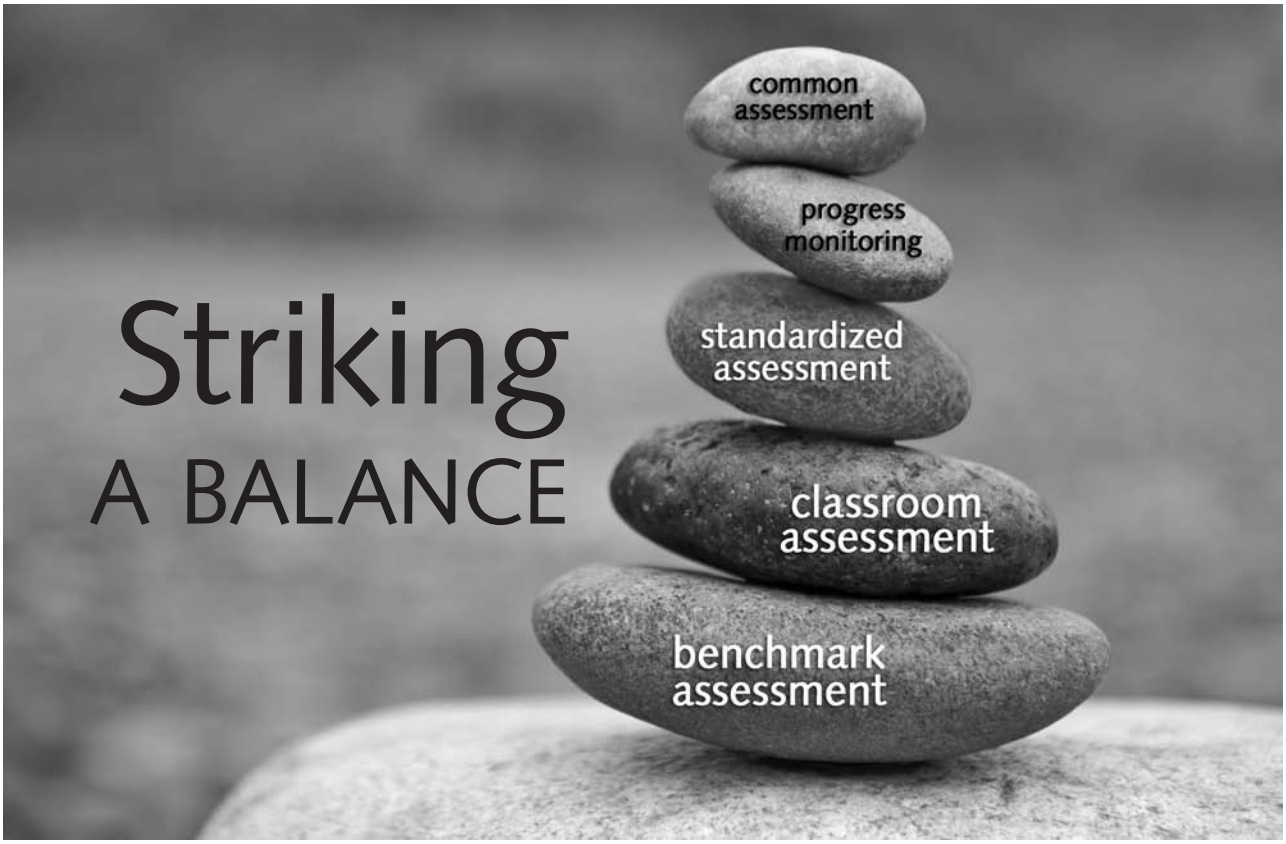

Striking A BALANCE

GEORGIA DISTRICT ADDS ASSESSMENTS AND TRANSFORMS CLASSROOM PRACTICE

BY LISSA PIJANOWSKI

Forsyth County Schools has recently finished a very successful year. In 2008, all 16 elementary schools and eight middle schools made Adequate Yearly Progress. In spite of the fact that Georgia administered new, more rigorous math assessments for grades 3-5 and grade 8, the district had an average of 22% more students passing the assessments than the state average. To what does this district attribute its success? Leaders and teachers believe that a new, intense focus on benchmark assessments combined with focused, collegial conversations contributed to this impressive growth.

Forsyth County Schools, located 35 miles north of Atlanta, has designed a balanced assessment program that emphasizes classroom assessment and organizes data and resources to foster collegial conversations focused on standards and learning. The district's focus on assessment began five years ago through a professional learning program called Focused Choice offering all staff in the 32,000-student district six early release days and two full staff development days for learning content that supports standards-based classrooms. One of the learning opportunities, Assessment FOR Learning (Stiggins & Chappuis, 2006), was designed to emphasize formative over summative assessment to provide timely and effective feedback to students (Marzano, 2003) and inform classroom practice. The professional learning not only transformed classroom practice, but also drove the district to make significant changes in how school leaders and teachers used assessment data.

For this district, balanced assessment does not mean that summative and formative measures are weighted equally. Forsyth County Schools creates a system that gives formative,

LISSA PIJANOWSKI is associate superintendent for academics and accountability in Forsyth County Schools. You can contact her at lpijanowski@forsyth.k12.ga.us.

Five assessment measures

Standardized assessment	Benchmark assessment	Common assessment	Classroom assessment	Progress monitoring
PURPOSE: A standardized test is designed to measure the amount of knowledge and skill a student has acquired and produces a statistical profile used as a measurement to evaluate student performance in comparison with a standard or norm.	PURPOSE: A benchmark assessment is designed as a measurement of group performance against an established set of standards at defined points along the path toward standard attainment, typically administered every nine weeks.	PURPOSE: A common assessment is collaboratively developed by grade-level teams or departments as a measurement of group or individual performance against an established set of standards.	PURPOSE: Classroom assessment refers to all assessment activities undertaken by teachers, and by the students themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged.	PURPOSE: Progress monitoring is a scientifically based practice that is used to monitor academic growth of an individual student or an entire class based on predetermined learning goals. The effectiveness of instruction and intervention is also evaluated.
DESIGNED BY: Georgia Department of Education and national assessment vendors.	DESIGNED BY: Forsyth County Schools and state and national item banks.	DESIGNED BY: Collaborative teacher teams/departments.	DESIGNED BY: Classroom teachers.	DESIGNED BY: Classroom teachers and national assessment vendors.
INSTRUCTIONAL DATA: Standardized tests can provide information on individual or group performance to help educators identify instructional needs, measure growth over time, evaluate effectiveness of programs, and monitor schools for educational accountability. Standardized tests are used at the national, state, system, school, and classroom level.	INSTRUCTIONAL DATA: Benchmark assessment results can be used to determine student growth and student performance relative to grade-level and/or course achievement expectations. Results can guide classroom instruction and identify individual student needs for reteaching, intervention, and/or acceleration. In addition, benchmark assessments provide periodic evaluation of program effectiveness and guide professional development efforts. Benchmark assessments are used at the system, school, and classroom level.	INSTRUCTIONAL DATA: Common assessments can provide teacher teams with data to determine student performance relative to learning goals identified in a unit of study. Results can be analyzed to guide classroom instruction and identify individual student needs for reteaching, intervention, and/or acceleration. Shared results foster collaboration to improve instruction and embedded professional learning. Common assessments are used at the school and classroom level.	INSTRUCTIONAL DATA: Formative assessment evidence is diagnostic and used to adapt the teaching to meet the needs of students. Results can be used to guide instruction and identify individual student needs for reteaching, intervention and/or acceleration. Students and teachers can use self-assessment to determine levels of achievement, set goals, and identify strategies to meet those goals. Classroom assessments are used at the classroom and student level.	INSTRUCTIONAL DATA: Progress monitoring data demonstrates a student's progression of achievement and informs how instructional techniques need to be adjusted to meet the individual student's learning needs. Results can guide decisions on reteaching, intervention, and/or acceleration. Progress monitoring tools are used at the school, classroom, and student level.

classroom assessment much more weight than standardized assessments. The chart above reflects five different assessment components in the district's balanced assessment program. Standardized tests are just one component; the other four are classroom assessment measures designed to give formative data on student progress against standards.

THE POWER OF BENCHMARKING

Benchmark assessments are one of the most recent additions to the assessment program. The district recognized that teacher leaders should

develop benchmark assessments for reading/English language arts and mathematics using consistent standards-based pacing guides. The district provided teachers guidance and instruction on how to choose items aligned to standards. Teachers became quality assessors through this process by considering item attributes such as Lexile range for reading passages and Bloom's Taxonomy level when critically choosing items to include on each assessment. With all classrooms in grades 3-8 using the assessments three times a year, the data have fostered rich dialogue not only within buildings among teams, but across the district. However, collegial conversations around using assessment evidence do not come naturally. School leaders need well-designed professional learning and relevant, timely data to frame the dialogue to transform classroom practice.

The district created school teams that included an administrator, teacher leaders, and the instructional technology specialist to engage in ongoing learning on using data reports and leading meaningful conversations. The professional learning design included training on how to access different types of reports providing student, classroom, and test item detail through Edusoft, Riverside's assessment management system. The district also published districtwide and school-level reports to highlight the standards across the district that posed the greatest challenge to students. The use of Edusoft to support formative assessment has provided classroom teachers the ability to create performance-based assessments, align assessments to standards, scan answer documents, and review results in a matter of minutes. The district leverages Edusoft for benchmark assessments as well to provide teachers with timely, meaningful reports.

Once teams were adept at accessing the data, the learning moved toward facilitating the conversations. The district modeled facilitation of collegial conversations for school team members at each session and provided sample questions, organizers, and reflection tools so that each team could design conversations that worked for their staff. School and district leaders engaged the staff in three levels of reflection and dialogue to develop a rich understanding of what the data were telling them about instructional practice and student performance.

Forsyth County Schools
Cumming, Ga.

Number of schools: 30 (16 elementary, 8 middle, 4 high, 1 nontraditional charter, 1 alternative)
Enrollment: 32,000
Staff: 3,500
Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	83%
Black:	2%
Hispanic:	9%
Asian/Pacific Islander:	4%
Native American:	0%
Other:	2%

Limited English proficient: 5%
Languages spoken: 29
Free/reduced lunch: 14%
Special education: 16%
Contact: Lissa Pijanowski, associate superintendent, Forsyth County Schools
E-mail: lpijanowski@forsyth.k12.ga.us

LEVEL 1

The first level was *individual teacher reflection.* Teachers used their class reports and item analysis to reflect on the following standards-based questions:

- Which items did students miss most frequently?
- What standard was each item aligned to?
- What was the school performance compared to your class performance on that item?
- Why do you think most of your students chose the responses they chose?
- What will you do now to reteach the standard?
- Which individual students require additional remediation and intervention based on these results?

These questions lead teachers to delve deeply into the standards they teach and to reflect on their instructional practice in a low-risk environment. Teacher understanding of their own performance data must precede conversations within a professional learning community. School leaders and teacher leaders provided support for teachers by asking coaching questions to ensure they had reached a deep level of individual understanding before engaging in team conversations.

LEVEL 2

The second level of reflection and dialogue was *grade-level/content-team conversation.* With individual reflections in hand, teachers participated in a grade-level/content-team meeting to determine overall strengths and challenges, discussing the following questions:

- What are our grade-level/content-team strengths based on the results?
- What are our team challenges based on the results?
- What factors in our curriculum and instruction do we feel influenced these results?
- How can we collaborate to reteach standards that are hardest to learn?
- How will we know if our students have mastered the standard?
- What remediation and intervention will be most effective for individual students with low performance?
- Is there additional professional

With all classrooms in grades 3-8 using the assessments three times a year, the data have fostered rich dialogue not only within buildings among teams, but across the district.

learning support that we need as a team to help us achieve our goals for student learning?

The purpose of the grade-level/content-team sessions is to identify standards that were most problematic and determine how the team can collaborate to reteach and reassess. The conversations in these sessions lead teachers to better understand the standards, brainstorm ideas for modifying instruction, and collaborate on a plan of action for remediation and intervention before the next assessment (Schmoker, 1999). The team sessions continued the learning of the individual teacher reflections. Teachers analyzed their results even more intensely and took actions they may not have otherwise considered in isolation.

LEVEL 3

The third level of reflection and dialogue was *schoolwide dialogue about the results.* Building leaders facilitated conversations about the benchmark assessments and how the results of these assessments, along with other assessment data, could influence the school improvement process. The benchmark assessments were incorporated into all school improvement plans as evidence of student learning to be monitored throughout the year. The data from the benchmarks allowed leaders to ask the following questions of their teaching and support staff:

Team sessions continued the learning of the individual teacher reflections.

- Do the results show we are making progress toward meeting our school improvement goals?
- Of the reading/English language arts and math target areas we identified for improvement this year, how did we perform?
- How did our subgroups and at-risk students perform?
- Are there strategies and actions in our school improvement plan that need to be modified based on these results?
- Are the remediation and interventions offered to our students adequate for closing the achievement gap?
- Do we need to modify our professional learning plan to provide additional support?
- What resources do you need to accomplish the curriculum and instructional changes you have identified?

This schoolwide dialogue enables school leadership to monitor the curriculum and instruction in the building as well as progress toward school improvement goals (Reeves, 2006).

The benchmark assessments have been a critical element of how Forsyth County Schools uses formative assessment data to impact classroom practice. The district's belief in the power of formative assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998) has guided the work of teachers as they review student work on a monthly, weekly, and daily basis through observations, portfolios, and conversations to make real-time decisions about instruction. Additionally, the benchmark assessments have enabled school and district leadership to monitor student progress toward standards using a guaranteed and viable curriculum (Marzano, 2003), and lead conversations that help triangulate all assessment components to provide timely feedback, remediation, and intervention.

Through implementation of the benchmark assessments as part of the balanced assessment program, the district has learned the following lessons:

- Teacher leaders must be involved in every facet of the project from developing pacing guides, to aligning assessment items, to organizing results.
- Purposeful professional learning opportunities must be designed to scaffold staff learning at all levels of the organization.
- District and school leaders must acknowledge that changes in curriculum and assessment to influence instruction can be uncomfortable for staff and must make modifications along the way to accommodate readiness levels.

Based on the results for students, the district plans to expand the use of the Edusoft assessment management system in 2008-09 to the high school level to support classroom assessment and benchmark assessments in high-stakes courses. Leaders and teachers in Forsyth County Schools believe benchmark assessments played a big role in the growth the district experienced after only one year. They have learned this lesson well: Never underestimate the power of timely, standards-based data and focused, collegial conversations led by knowledgeable leadership to impact changes in professional practice and, ultimately, improvements in student achievement.

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COMMUNITY EVENTS OFFER CULTURAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Culturally proficient schools have carefully developed an awareness of the communities they serve. The teachers and leaders know who lives in the community, value and build upon the assets students and families bring, and recognize the challenges in the local environment that affect both school and community. Therefore, developing strong relationships with the community is an important step in creating culturally proficient schools. Because teachers and school leaders may be reluctant to engage with the community out of fear or lack of understanding, we recommend integrating community-based activities as a component of developing educators' cultural proficiency.

There is a wide array of community-based exercises to use with educators. Some are designed to help develop cultural understanding in all participants. Others aim to foster connections between school and home. Ultimately, community-based activities can engage educators and community members in collective action to build stronger communities. But for those new to community learning, the place to begin is by encouraging teachers to leave the school building and step into the streets outside to see cultural differences in context and experience being in an unfamiliar environment.

Attending community events is one way to do this. Some events provide opportunities for cultural learning more than others, which is why selecting the event is an important consideration. This is an excellent place for direction from a professional developer or school leader. If left completely on their own, educators may choose events that are only slightly outside their comfort zones, resulting in little growth. Some participants may attend events so unfamiliar that they have no frame of reference from which to understand them. To prevent these situations, school leaders should create a list of appropriate learning events.

SARAH W. NELSON is an assistant professor in the Department of Education and Community Leadership and associate director of the International Center for Educational Leadership and Social Change at Texas State University-San Marcos, and co-founder of Transforming Schools for a Multicultural Society (TRANSFORMS). You can contact her at swnelson@txstate.edu.

PATRICIA L. GUERRA is an assistant professor in the Department of Education and Community Leadership at Texas State University-San Marcos and co-founder of Transforming Schools for a Multicultural Society (TRANSFORMS). You can contact her at pg16@txstate.edu.

WHAT KIND OF EVENTS?

When people of the same culture gather, they tend to express cultural norms more freely than in cross-cultural groups. In a monocultural context, shared cultural norms are more visible, allowing even those not familiar with the culture to "see" what behavior is expected and valued by the group. How people greet each other, what they talk about, how closely they stand to one another, and how they express themselves are all observable aspects of culture. At cross-cultural events with multiple culture groups present, people are not as likely to adhere strictly to the norms of their culture group. In these situations, norms are much more difficult to distinguish, particularly for those who are still developing a cultural knowledge base. Though cross-cultural events are instructive for those with deeper cultural knowledge, events associated with a particular culture group are more appropriate initially.

In each issue of *JSD,* Sarah W. Nelson, above, and Patricia L. Guerra write about the importance of and strategies for developing cultural awareness in teachers and schools. The columns are available at www.nsdc.org.

Another factor in selecting an event is whether the setting allows for interaction. While educators will learn through observation alone, they will gain greater understanding with some level of social interaction. Additionally, interaction promotes the use of cross-cultural communication skills. Sometimes such conversations can put educators in the fortunate position of being in a cultural-informant relationship, where a member of the culture group acts as a guide to explain what is happening and to answer questions. Facilitators will want to steer participants toward events that are conducive to interaction. This does not guarantee educators will interact, but at least the opportunity is there.

A final consideration is whether the event is private or public. Public events, such as street fairs, music festivals, and community celebrations are open to anyone. This makes them easily accessible, and on the surface, these events may seem to be more comfortable for an outsider. Yet many such events are sponsored by commercial vendors and have little to do with the culture group. Attending this kind of event may serve to reinforce stereotypes rather than facilitate learning. Private events such as family celebrations, neighborhood gatherings, ceremonies, religious services, and organization meetings are excellent venues for gaining cultural understanding. However, private events are

intended only for people who have been invited or are a recognized member of the group.

How does the professional developer negotiate this dilemma between avoiding public events that are connected with culture in name only and gaining appropriate access to private events? The answer lies in the professional developer doing work upfront to connect with respected community members. Community members are all too glad to include educators in their activities when they know educators are there to learn and to develop authentic relationships. Professional developers can facilitate such a relationship by contacting representatives of key community organizations to explain the work the school is doing toward cultural proficiency and ask for guidance in identifying appropriate events. Ethnic chambers of commerce, community centers, multicultural schools, religious leader groups, and groups such as NAACP, National Council of La Raza, and American Indian advocacy networks are examples of the kinds of organizations that can be a resource for the professional developer.

PREPARING FOR THE EVENT

Background information. Find out as much as possible about event logistics. When participants know the time, location, and cost, they are like to experience a positive start to the event. Few of us are open to learning when we've gotten lost, arrived late, or been unprepared financially. Knowing what activities will be available is also helpful. In some cases, there are many activities to choose from at a single event. Some educators may be open to spontaneously selecting activities and seeing what happens. For others, this level of uncertainty may detract from the experience. The facilitator can help by gathering information and making this available to participants.

Inviting someone who is familiar with the event to meet with educators beforehand is also beneficial. Informing participants about what to expect and answering questions will dispel apprehension. Additionally, the informant can help educators make meaning of the experience during the debriefing process that follows the event.

Group size. In assigning educators to events, consider the number of participants in relation to the size of the event. For small events, the presence of more than two or three "outsiders" may significantly alter group dynamics. Even for larger events, educators should attend individually or in pairs and avoid gathering in larger groups. Large groups discourage participants from interacting and may cause the group to behave as sightseers. This inhibits learning and may lead to resentment on the part of those hosting the event.

Participation. Once at the event, educators should be ready and willing to participate, not merely observe. Encourage them to talk to people, ask questions, listen and watch as people interact, and try to understand what is happening in light of their cultural knowledge. They should also make mental note of how they are feeling. How did it feel when they first walked into the event? What was it like to be in the minority? How did they react when they were not quite certain what to do? Did they encounter conflicts? How did they react? What actions did they take to be an active member of the group? How did members of the group respond? What cultural differences did they notice?

LEARNING FROM THE EVENT

Ask participants to reflect on their experience immediately afterward. Have them write a description of what they saw and heard and how they felt. This is best done individually so each person is able to process the experience without being influenced by the perceptions of others. Often, two people who attend an event together will have differing views about the experience, which leads to rich discussions. If the two immediately reflect on the experience collectively, they may ignore the differences in their perceptions in an effort to come to consensus.

Bring the group together to share reflections. Have someone record key ideas. Begin by giving a brief description of the event and then asking each person to share his/her reflection. Ask participants to listen carefully for commonalities and anomalies in responses. If the group attended more than one event, describe one event and have each person who attended share his or her perspective. Continue until all participants have had a chance to discuss the event they attended and to share reflections.

As a facilitator, a key role in this type of learning is leading the group in making sense of this experience. Ask the group to consider such questions as: What aspects of culture did they see? How were they able to tie this to previous learning? What do they have questions about? What assumptions did they have going into the event? Were these dispelled? How comfortable were they in this setting? What behaviors did they use that worked? What behaviors did not work? What conflicts occurred? How were these resolved? What was it like to engage in cross-cultural communication? What did they learn about themselves? Would they attend similar events again?

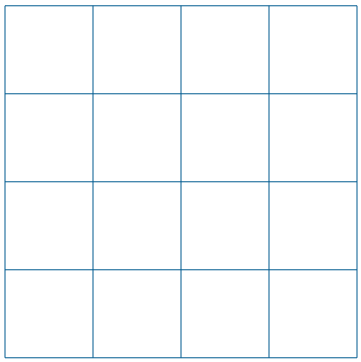
As the group processes this experience, ask them to consider what they are taking away from it that will help them build stronger relationships with the students and families they serve. Listen carefully as their responses are a guide to whether they are ready for more advanced community-based learning or whether they may need other development to be prepared to effectively engage community members. ■

USE 'BOTH/AND' THINKING TO FIND THE BEST OF TWO SIDES OF A CONFLICT

"But," my father used to say with a burst of air after a long exposition on a topic. Then he would launch into a counterpoint to what he had just said. I loved his ability to examine ideas from various perspectives.

I also realized that, in many contexts, the word "but" signals that the previous statement is wrong. As a coordinating conjunction, the word "but" joins two words, phrases, or clauses of equal value. Yet, for many, "but" stirs our emotions, overriding our sense of logic. This is as it should be — "but" puts us on guard.

Some groups practice "but watching." Assign a "but watcher" in groups that frequently use "but" as the first response to a comment. Monitoring the "buts" gives rise to consciousness and can lead a group to using a different word to lead off statements: "and."



There are many ways to register alternative viewpoints without the sense of confrontation that the word "but" can bring. We sometimes show a group a figure such as the one at left and ask participants how many squares they see. We record the responses: 16, 1, 17, 25, and so on. Next, we ask a person who said one of the higher numbers to show the group what they saw. Then we ask, "Is the person who said 16 wrong? 17? 1?" To each question, the group answers no. Finally, we suggest that in the conversation to follow, if they disagree with a speaker, they can say, "I have another point of view" or "I see it a different way," rather than starting a statement out with "but" to signal disagreement.

TWO SIDES TO EVERY STORY

And while there are often two sides to an argument, the two ends are rarely contradictions. Those two ends generally work together. Exploring both sides of an issue provides a group with a richer understanding.

A principal recently confided to me that the issue of gum chewing was threatening to tear her faculty apart. About half the group felt it was harmless. Allowing gum chewing respected the individuality and needs of kids. The other half believed that gum chewing should not be permitted. It damages the environment, requires classroom management time, and leads to cleaning energy and costs. After watching tensions grow, the principal realized that gum was not the issue. The concerns lie at a deeper level of values — the desire to respect student individuality and the desire to respect the environment. The principal and the group would not have discovered these deeper concerns without the willingness and skills to inquire into each position. Now the group was able to work at the level of "both/and," seeking to attain the best of both sets of values.

In each issue of *JSD*, Robert J. Garmston writes about how to create collaborative work environments that result in improved student learning. His columns can be found at www.nsdc.org.

Here's a strategy that often works for helping groups find common ground. When a group is polarized by two conflicting positions, create an ad hoc subcommittee that includes voices from both sides. Ask the smaller group to work out their differences, and return to the full group with a proposal. The facilitator checks with the full group to learn if they will either:

- Accept the recommendation of the subgroup, or
- Receive and consider the subgroup's recommendation before making a decision as a full group.

Choosing the most vociferous participants on each side works best. They seem to have the most at stake and are often the most influential over their peers.

POLARITIES

While getting to the root of an issue is a solution for some problems, for others, no solution exists. Groups can become trapped and waste valuable energy if they see all problems as resolvable.

Carolyn McKanders, co-director of the Center for Adaptive Schools, defines polarities — some large, some not so large — as a fact of life in schools. A polarity is a chronic, ongoing tension inherent in either individuals or organizations. Polarities are unavoidable, unsolvable, and have two or more right answers that are interdependent (McKanders, in press). These must be managed using "both/and" thinking, where the objective is to get the best of both opposites

ROBERT J. GARMSTON is co-founder of Center for Adaptive Schools and a professor emeritus at California State University, Sacramento's School of Education. You can contact him at FABob@aol.com.

Polarities facilitators manage	Polarities schools manage
• Full-group/small-group interaction • Hard/soft facilitation • Tight/loose protocols	• Team/individual • Individual rubrics/school rubrics • Centralized/decentralized

while avoiding the limits or downsides of each.

The first question groups can ask is, "Is this a problem to be solved or a priority to be managed?" Problems to solve are those with one right answer or two or more right answers that are independent of one another. One example is: What should we include in our parent survey?

In contrast, polarities to be managed are sets of opposites that can't function well independently. They require "both/and" thinking. Because the two sides of a polarity are interdependent, you cannot choose one as a solution and neglect the other.

FULL-GROUP/SMALL-GROUP INTERACTION

Facilitators consistently manage a ratio of full-group and small-group interactions. The advantages of full-group conversations include opportunities for participants to hear a common message and develop a sense of the full community. The downsides include frequent talkers dominating the conversation or participants tuning out or tiring out. Upsides of small-group interaction include anonymity to express oneself and full-member participation. The richest thinking is generated in small groups. Small-group work, of course, must be balanced with giving the full group information from its subparts.

HARD/SOFT FACILITATION

Groups may require tightly directed facilitation or facilitation that allows groups a hand in guiding the processes. Amount of meeting time, complexity of topic, and group skill will all be factored in to facilitation choices. Again, neither position alone is correct.

TIGHT/LOOSE PROTOCOLS

Cognitive complexity, high emotion, or new content may call for tight structures. Tight structures provide cognitive safety, focus members narrowly on what to talk about and how to talk, and give specific directions for members to follow. When the topic is easier to discuss, facilitators can use less restrictive strategies. Loose structures allow more informal talk, are free from protocol restrictions, and evoke more natural and idiosyncratic engagement. A facilitator or group must choose how much of each portion of those poles they want for a specific task. Looking beyond a specific topic, the choice may be determining how much of either type to use over time, as the group develops its capacity to manage itself.

"First turn/last turn" is an example of a tight structure. It gives shape to the conversation by providing a focus for talking, naming processes to be used, indicating the cognitive skills required, and setting boundaries for behavior and topic. In this protocol, members read relevant text and mark three or four items that catch their attention. Then, one person in the group names an idea he or she marked. In round-robin fashion, each member comments on the item with an absence of cross talk. After each person speaks, the initiating person has the last turn. The group follows the pattern for a specified amount of time. The downside is the suppression of individual styles of participation.

In contrast, a "say something" protocol is loosely structured. Partners read a selection of content, pausing at designated times to say something about what they have read. No expectations or restrictions are placed on the conversation other than it is about the reading. The downside is that pairs can veer off task without noticing it.

Leading groups is in large part a matter of managing polarities. Facilitators choose from a range of options to best serve the topic or moment. Binary thinking is restricting, often denying groups opportunities for creative problem solving. Our tendency to see in either/or frames may be a heritage from Western thinking, which is oriented toward classification, compartmentalization, and hierarchy. Including more Eastern thinking, such as comprehending the whole and not just its parts, may help us banish the "buts" and ultimately benefit group development.

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WHAT WOULD A SCHOOL LOOK LIKE IF IT PRACTICED THE WAY DOCTORS DO?

My friend is a teacher, and she has cancer. Once a week, she visits her doctor for treatments. She is evaluated, and her treatments are adjusted based on these continuous and regular assessments of her health. Between her visits, her doctor meets with colleagues in his practice to review her films and test results. As a team, they offer input based on their wide range and many years of experience in treating cancers like hers. Her doctor is confident that she is receiving not only the best of his mind and practice, but the best of his colleagues' knowledge as well. Each week, these doctors gather for a half-day of reviewing cases, looking at new information on their patients, sharing new learning, and determining the most promising practices with which to treat their patients. My friend, pleased with the care she receives from her team of doctors, wonders why the teachers in her school don't do the same kind of analysis and learning together with regard to student learning. What would a school look like if it practiced the way these doctors practice? How would teachers work together in teams to treat student learning challenges so that all students learn and perform at high levels?

We demand that a doctor regularly assess our health to select a course of action for improvement. We demand that those treatments that don't make a positive difference be stopped or replaced. Yet we don't always make the same demands in schools. For example, Mia is an assistant principal at an elementary school in a large urban district. The school has about 185 educators on staff, and Mia is charged with the adult learning for these educators. Mia has a list of activities she shares with the teachers, courses or workshops that teachers have appreciated. Some of these workshops have been repeated annually for the last 10 years. Lately, though, Mia has wondered if she is spending her time and staff development dollars on adult learning that makes a difference in student learning. She has evidence that teachers like the learning she has designed, but she has no evidence that this adult learning is making any difference in student learning. What evidence do schools and systems use to indicate that the professional learning is making a difference in student learning?

LEA ARNAU is past president of the Georgia Staff Development Council and retired director of professional learning for Gwinnett County Public Schools. She teaches at the University of Georgia and is the coach of the NSDC Academy Class of 2009. You can contact her at leaarnau@yahoo.com.

Many of you have attended these "speaker-of-the-month" sessions for years. What difference has this type of disjointed staff development made in your behaviors in the classroom, and ultimately in student learning? According to NSDC's Data-Driven standard, "Staff development that improves that learning of all students uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement" (Roy & Hord, 2003, p. 25). At the same time, the Learning Communities standard asks that teachers "meet regularly with colleagues during the school day to plan instruction, align collaborative work with school improvement goals, and participate in learning teams, some of whose membership extends beyond the school" (Roy & Hord, 2003, pp. 14-15). If a school or system is focusing on the Data-Driven and Learning Communities standards, teachers' work might look something like the practices of my friend's doctors.

Lea Arnau's columns on NSDC's standards are available at www.nsdc.org.

Small teams of teachers who share common curriculum meet on a regular basis, at least once a week, to learn together. This adult learning is driven by the gaps in student learning that the team has determined as they have reviewed student learning results. The evidence these teachers need to justify the work they are doing in their teams is improved student learning. Mia and her principal know this, and as the school year is beginning, they are considering how to create the conditions necessary for student learning to drive adult learning for teachers.

The school has set aside time for teachers to work in grade-level teams. At the middle and high schools, Mia's colleagues meet according to content areas. Mia has pulled together the grade-level chairs at the elementary school to learn how their work this year will change. She and the school-based coach will support these chairs as they learn to facilitate adult learning within their teams. Mia suggests the teams focus on two main areas during the first month of school: setting norms for effective teamwork, and reviewing student data to determine adult learning for the team.

Because team leaders are often uncomfortable in making these changes, school leaders will support them with examples of norms, literature on adult learning theory, and opportunities for practice, feedback, and coaching. Mia is asking that her grade-level leaders show evidence of the

work they are doing with the adults on their teams by submitting the minutes of their meetings, the norms they have determined, and the target areas they will focus on to improve student learning. In addition, Mia suggests that teams and individuals write SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, results-based, and time-bound) and plans of action to organize the work and to hold one another accountable.

During the first month of the school year, the grade-level teams at Mia's elementary school have gathered data on new students. The grade chairs, supported by Mia and the instructional coach, have created a set of questions that teachers use to facilitate data conversations within their teams. On one team, the teachers have a clear understanding that, as a group, their students are generally on target in all but two areas, decoding and reading comprehension. They decide that they will plan their lessons together, particularly in these two areas, so that all of the students are receiving the best of their knowledge and skills as educators. Because they have a high population of students whose primary language is not English, these teachers have asked a variety of instructional specialists in the school to work with their team, providing strategies and fresh ideas. As a team, these teachers learn from their colleagues and formulate mini-action research assignments, reporting back on their successes and their challenges each week, continuing to check data, revise plans, and reassess student learning. In addition, they have asked these specialists if, instead of pulling small groups of students out of class for instruction, it is possible for the specialist to co-teach mini-lessons with each of them so that the strategies can be shared with all students on the grade level. This job-embedded professional learning allows the teacher to observe the specialist in action, meets the needs of the most challenged student learners, and allows other students to gain as well.

Back in the team meetings, the norms from the beginning of the year compel each teacher to give evidence that her professional learning in these data-driven areas has improved student learning. Common assessments developed by the team allow teachers to keep a close watch on student learning and to adjust their own learning as appropriate.

As the year progresses, grade-level teams in Mia's school will come across situations where they need expertise they cannot get within the school team. Central office personnel, colleagues from other schools, professional organizations, and outside consultants support their efforts to gain knowledge, skills, and understanding for their teachers. Like staff development days of long ago, the district hires outside consultants on occasion. The difference is that the district seeks these external consultants because of special expertise directly connected to student learning needs within the school. In addition, the school, district, and teams hold the teachers accountable for implementing the new learning they gain from their work together.

What evidence do schools and systems use to indicate that professional learning is making a difference in student learning? Often we ask this question at the culmination of adult learning sessions, as opposed to planning adult learning initially based on the evidence we will seek when we review student data. I'm certain that my friend, fighting her cancer, has a set of numbers or levels she hopes to reach as a result of the treatments she is enduring. Teachers who have a clear vision of student achievement goals, an understanding of the gaps in student learning, and a focused plan of professional learning to address those gaps by first improving adult learning will see the way to improved student learning consistently and over time. Routine and continuous assessments, conversations, working in teams, planning, learning, and relearning are the tools that teachers need while working within learning communities and using data-driven professional learning that improves the learning of all students.

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LET STAKEHOLDERS KNOW WHAT YOU INTEND TO ACCOMPLISH

A few weeks ago, I received a call from a superintendent in Illinois. His request was one I've heard before. He was preparing for a board meeting and wanted some help. "Can you provide me with research to support our decision to introduce early release Wednesdays in next year's calendar?"

I told him that, unfortunately, I did not have the definitive research study that he could cite at his board meeting. However, we were able to outline a plan that would allow him to comfortably defend the decision. Too frequently, we assume we need research to support a decision when we haven't yet clarified for ourselves why we're headed in a certain direction.

I suggested that the superintendent begin building his case by clarifying for his stakeholders what the district planned to accomplish with the early release days. More specifically, I suggested he clarify the specific results parents might expect to see in classrooms and teachers might expect to see from students. In my view, marketing results to both groups was going to be critical to the successful implementation of the plan.

If parents were going to be asked to make new sacrifices, they needed to know they would see something substantive as a result. The idea that "teachers will learn new strategies to better serve your children" would probably not engender their support. He needed to say with confidence something like "we expect all of our students to be reading at the proficient level by the end of the school year."

ADDRESSING THE REAL CHALLENGE

Leaders in the district were pushing for early release days because they realized that staff needed collaborative learning time to address student performance challenges, particularly in literacy.

In their view, early release days would provide a structure to support collaborative learning among the district's teachers. Teams of teachers would gain time to examine data, determine student data needs in literacy, learn new strategies to enhance student performance, monitor the impact of the application of the strategies, support each other, and presumably demonstrate student learning gains. By systematically engaging all teachers, the district could ensure that all students would benefit from the change. This was the rationale the superintendent would share with the Board of Trustees. Improved performance in literacy by all students would be the ultimate result.

He anticipated board members might ask on what basis he felt confidence in this approach. At this point, the superintendent could share research with his trustees. Research demonstrates that teacher quality is the No. 1 indicator of student success. (Education Trust, 2004). Research indicates that professional development produces change for teachers and results for students when it is targeted at examining student data to determine learning needs, continued consistently over time, and experienced in a collaborative environment (Silva, 2008).

In each issue of *JSD*, Stephanie Hirsh will share a professional learning challenge and possible solutions that create results for educators and their students. All columns are available at www.nsdc.org.

Finally, we discussed the importance of building a plan to ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved. Together, the superintendent and I brainstormed several steps he might use as part of an action plan for implementing early release day professional learning next year. While he may not choose to include all of these components, I believe we were both challenged and inspired by the depth of our conversation and the rigor with which we addressed his charge.

STEPS IN MAKING THE CASE

Identify the groups affected by the decision.

In this case, three key stakeholders needed information to become comfortable with and ultimately support the decision: the school board, the parents, and the teachers.

Determine the student need that justifies the investment in teacher learning.

Sharing student data and identifying priorities for students is the first important step of any improvement effort. By identifying a compelling issue — lower than acceptable student performance in literacy — the district identifies a concern shared by the school board, parents, and teachers.

Clarify options for addressing the priority.

While there are many strategies for assisting students, a systematic plan for investing in teacher learning may be

STEPHANIE HIRSH is executive director of the National Staff Development Council. You can contact her at stephanie.hirsh@nsdc.org.

among the most effective for impacting all teachers and benefiting all students.

Identify appropriate educator learning.

Educator learning can mean different things to different people. In this case, the superintendent must identify the professional learning that will be most likely to produce the desired student results. This is another good time for identifying specific research studies. The district can use this research to show that the specific content and learning processes identified are a worthwhile investment.

Schedule educator learning.

The district is again in a position to consider a variety of alternatives. While the district could schedule professional development before and after the official workday, the superintendent believes that the importance and depth of this learning will require more than a few hours over the course of the year. Therefore, he has determined that this professional learning must be scheduled during the workday so there are no distractions and so that everyone can attend. The superintendent decides that establishing early release Wednesdays will provide the time needed to accomplish the learning goals.

The district will benefit from developing a communication plan for reporting on the progress of the improvement initiative.

Implement educator learning.

Leaders in the district will need to articulate how they will ensure that staff use this time wisely, that they examine data, explore appropriate teaching processes, develop powerful lessons, consider student responses, and design implementation and follow-up support. Plans for classroom-based support and monitoring of results will also be necessary.

Establish and communicate benchmarks for success.

Any staff designing an improvement effort will need to identify benchmarks for success early in the planning stages to determine the best course of action. At this point, the superintendent announces how the district will measure the success of the investment. He shares quantifiable goals — for example, if the district invests in 72 hours of learning time for every teacher, the district expects a specific percentage increase in student test scores. The superintendent articulates his theory of action, meaning he can describe how each step the district takes will lead to measurable student success.

Monitor and report on progress regularly.

Communicating progress clearly and frequently ensures that interested stakeholders have enough information to support a change. Therefore, the district will benefit from developing a communication plan for reporting on the progress of the improvement initiative. Some options include monthly reports by principals and teachers at school board meetings, presentations by central office staff and review of data at principal meetings, interviews on local cable shows, articles in the newspaper, district web site updates, and letters to parents.

The superintendent might also ask principals and teachers to write to parents about the differences they are seeing in classrooms as a result of the early release days. He might ask principals and teachers to reflect on their learning regularly and consider the impact this work is having on students and then to share this information with the community. Another option for sharing successes is to have students speak at school board meetings or write for the school paper or web site. While this might not work in all cases, hearing from students sends a message of success quite effectively. Finally, the district might consider hiring an outside evaluator who provides objective data and perspectives on the initiative.

In the end, the most important information for all stakeholders will be indicators of improved student performance. These results will convince all involved that the investment in early release days was a wise one. Once districts can clearly document encouraging results, they are more easily able to sell future professional learning proposals to important constituencies. Therefore, I suggest that anyone planning a new initiative start with the end in mind. Improved student results make the best case.

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COURAGE, CONFIDENCE, CLARITY

MARK THE PATHWAY TO CHANGE

NSDC's deputy executive director addresses evaluation anxiety and the challenges coaches face

BY TRACY CROW

JSD: I'd like you to talk about two key aspects of your work. One is evaluating professional learning and the other is coaching. In *Assessing Impact: Evaluating Staff Development,* 2nd Edition, you write, "Evaluation — not just data — is increasingly important for changing schools. … The use of data, not just data alone, has the potential to transform teaching and learning and systems to support them." How do educators and schools make the leap from gathering data to conducting evaluations?

Q&A

Joellen Killion: Data become information when they are analyzed and interpreted. To move from data

TRACY CROW is the editor of *JSD.* You can contact her at tracy.crow@nsdc.org.

to evaluation, we begin with a plan that sets a framework for the evaluation. The plan is created in the context of the professional learning we are evaluating. Data help us know where we are in relationship to where we want to go. We can use that data to create the pathway to get to our desired results. Data help us look at points along that pathway to assess if we are making progress in the right direction. So to move from gathering data to evaluation, we need a goal, a clear pathway to achieve the goal, and defined indicators of success along the way. Having an evaluation framework that includes, minimally, a defined goal, a clear process, and data describing where we are in relationship to where we intend to be is absolutely essential to use data effectively and to do a sound evaluation.

The anxiety that often surrounds evaluation needn't be based on a lack of knowledge or skill. I believe most educators have the knowledge and skills to engage in evaluation. What they lack is confidence in their ability and time to engage in evaluation. They may also lack courage — the courage to really find out if what they're doing makes a difference.

People engage in evaluation thinking and evaluation processes every day. They do it by making judgments about what they like and don't like. For example, we evaluate food, service we experience, or a person's behavior. Teachers and principals look at something going on in a school and make a determination about its value or effectiveness. Somewhere they hold a set of criteria, often implicitly, that defines what they consider valuable or effective. What I find is often missing is that people fail to make their criteria explicit. In schools, when we want to evaluate the impact of something, educators often fail to collect baseline data. To determine impact, a single set of data is insufficient. Measuring impact requires baseline data along with data gathered at a later time for comparison purposes. A single set of data only tells us where we are at the moment.

Educators are afraid of formal evaluation. I sometimes think their research training in advanced degree programs has led them to be afraid of it. Yet they engage in evaluation daily. I believe educators know more about evaluation than they think they do.

JSD: So what do educators need to know to conduct evaluations?

Killion: First of all, they need to know good program planning. In my approach to assessing the impact of staff development, the first step is planning a good program that has potential for producing results. It is difficult to evaluate a program that is insufficiently comprehensive and therefore unlikely to produce its intended results. The second step is identifying the questions to answer in the evaluation. These questions set the parameters for the type of data or evidence to collect, the data source and collection methodology, and how to analyze the data. We're constantly asking questions about our work, so asking questions is not a challenge. What is challenging is getting the right questions to guide the evaluation. Next, people need to be able to identify appropriate data sources and data collection methods. Choosing data sources and data collection methods requires thoughtful consideration about the feasibility, cost, and appropriateness of the decision. Increasingly, we are finding data that are extant in our systems, which can be used in evaluations without engaging in new or more intrusive data collection.

The part of the evaluation process that usually causes anxiety for most educators is data analysis. Many evaluations can be conducted with simple descriptive statistics such as addition, subtraction, division, figuring means, medians, modes, and ranges rather than more complex inferential statistics. Microsoft Excel is a wonderful resource for those conducting any kind of data analysis.

The anxiety that often surrounds evaluation needn't be based on a lack of knowledge or skill. I believe most educators have the knowledge and skills to engage in evaluation. What they lack is confidence in their ability and time to engage in evaluation. They may also lack courage — the courage to really find out if what they're doing makes a difference.

JSD: More than 10 years ago, you were working on the results-based staff development initiative — identifying content-specific staff development that resulted in increased student achievement. What has changed in terms of what we know about whether professional development makes a difference for students?

Killion: We have greater clarity now that professional development does make a difference in terms of teaching and student learning. Ten years ago, there was a strong belief that linking staff development with student learning was impossible. Today, that belief has changed, and so have researchers' and evaluators' attempts to assess the impact of professional development on student learning. One major change in the last 10 years is that the federal government, which formerly did not hold grant recipients responsible for assessing the link between teacher enhancement and student achievement, is now doing so. National Science Foundation grants such as the Mathematics and Science Partnership, for example, now require recipients to measure the impact of teacher professional development on student achievement. Beliefs about evaluation

have shifted evaluation practice, and I am delighted.

JSD: How can educators know if the professional development approaches that NSDC and others advocate are effective and based on research?

Killion: The field of research about the effects of professional development is expanding. The best ways to know if professional development is effective and based on research are to both read the research and conduct evaluations. NSDC has a plan to create an evidence database that will synthesize research about professional learning. There are already good sources of information about effective educational innovations. The national What Works Clearinghouse is one source for finding research- or evidence-based practices (http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/). NSDC's collection of *What Works* books is another good source (see www.nsdc.org/connect/projects/resultsbased.cfm).

Sometimes the best practices are right within schools. If we would take time to study the effects of the practices we are engaged in, guide our study with critical questions about teaching practice and its impact, and use evidence about teaching and learning in the analysis process, educators would have their own action research to assess the impact of their professional development practices. These are all ways educators can know with some certainty that the practices they are engaged in are supported by evidence and make a difference in terms of both teaching practice and student learning.

To monitor progress along the pathway toward a goal, it is helpful to have a theory of change that identifies the pathway or actions needed to implement change. Along the pathway, educators can assess whether each action produces the results that, when added together with the other results expected along the pathway, produce results for students. So, for example, when teachers or principals attend a professional development session on reading strategies, the step of attending the session is just one action along the theory of change that includes adapting the strategies for their students, curriculum, and classroom, trying them out, receiving feedback about their implementation, assessing students' ability to use the strategies, and eventually assessing students' ability to be better readers.

JSD: What does this look like in a school or district?

Killion: Let's say I am seeking better reading performance, particularly in the area of reading and interpreting informational text. I first look for examples of practices that have improved students' reading performance in this area and in schools like mine. I might check the What Works Clearinghouse for programs that address improving students' ability to interact with informational text. I might look in my school to find out which teachers are successful with this particular reading skill. I might find other schools that do better in this area than ours does. In each case, I want to know what teachers know and do that helps their students be successful in this area. Second, I figure out what teachers at our school need to know and do differently to implement the strategies we discovered do make a difference. Then, we create a theory of change that includes the professional learning experiences for teachers to acquire the knowledge, refine their skills, expand their classroom practice, and implement the new practices with regularity and

To monitor progress along the pathway toward a goal, it is helpful to have a theory of change that identifies the pathway or actions needed to implement change.

JOELLEN KILLION

Position: Deputy executive director at NSDC. Killion's work has included serving as director of NSDC's Academy and the newer Coaching Academy for school-based staff developers. She has also managed the council's initiatives in results-based staff development and evaluating staff development.

Professional history: Killion is a former school district staff developer, curriculum coordinator, and teacher in the Adams 12 Five Star School District in suburban Denver, Colo. Killion was a member of NSDC's Board of Trustees and served a term as president before she was employed as a staff member.

Publications: Killion is author of *Assessing Impact: Evaluating Staff Development, 2nd Edition* (Corwin Press & NSDC, 2008), co-author with Stephanie Hirsh of *The Learning Educator: A New Era for Professional Learning* (NSDC, 2007), co-author with Cindy Harrison of *Taking the Lead: New Roles for Teachers and School-Based Coaches* (NSDC, 2006), and NSDC's three-volume results-based *What Works* series. She contributes numerous articles to NSDC publications, including a monthly column on NSDC's Standards for Staff Development for the *Teachers Teaching Teachers* newsletter.

To continue this conversation, contact Killion at joellen.killion@nsdc.org.

fidelity. Teachers may benefit from training, coaching, co-planning, peer coaching, developing common assessments, or analyzing student work, so I look for multiple and deeply connected learning opportunities in which teachers can collaborate to move knowledge and skill to practice and student performance. Along this pathway, I am assessing the results for teachers and students to know if I am making progress.

JSD: So you have these data — what do you do with them now?

Killion: Throughout this process, I'm analyzing the information to determine if every action I'm taking is producing the results intended. If not, I intervene. Continuous monitoring and reflection allow those involved in any innovation to know with a fair degree of certainty where they are along the path toward the goal. This monitoring, coupled with a willingness to fill gaps as they occur, increases the certainty that results will flow from the actions we take.

Throughout this process, I'm analyzing the information to determine if every action I'm taking is producing the results intended. If not, I intervene. Continuous monitoring and reflection allow those involved in any innovation to know with a fair degree of certainty where they are along the path toward the goal.

JSD: What is the role of school-based coaches in evaluation?

Killion: Coaches can contribute to evaluations in multiple ways. Most commonly they can lead evaluation conversations. There is a process called "evaluation think." Joy Frechtling of Westat used the term during the time she served on the Assessing Impact advisory board. She used the phrase to talk about how people are always thinking evaluatively. I have added some structure to how that thinking occurs. In a nutshell, evaluation think means that educators are constantly asking these five questions.

1. What's working?
2. How do we know that? What evidence are we using to tell us that our hunches about success are in fact true?
3. What's not working?
4. How do we know that? What evidence do we use to inform us that what we think isn't working really isn't working?
5. What are we going to do about it?

Coaches have a role in virtually every conversation they have with teachers to engage them in evaluation think. If a coach meets with a team of teachers, they can use the questions as a framework for their interactions: What's working in terms of student learning, what's not working, how do we know those things, what are we going to do about it? If a coach and a teacher are meeting individually, those five questions become the frame of an individual coaching session. But the most important part of the coach's role is to help a teacher take the data, know what it means, and to do something about it.

Additionally, coaches can help teachers access, read, and discuss research. They can assist teachers in conducting action research projects within their classrooms or schools. Coaches help teachers use data to make decisions about instruction. Coaches can help teachers examine their own practice and reflect on its effectiveness.

The most important role coaches have in evaluation is continuous evaluation of the impact of their own practices.

JSD: Much of your work recently has been in support of people in a coaching role. You coordinate the coaching academies for NSDC, and you write about the coach's various roles. How has this position changed?

Killion: The coach role has evolved enormously. Thirty-two years ago, I was a coach in a high school. My job was to work with underperforming teachers. My office was hidden away in a corner, because my principal believed it was important that the teachers I worked with were not seen working with me. Schools and districts that are implementing coaching now recognize that the center for learning for adults is inside the work that they are doing in schools. Districts are leveraging the ability to put a skillful learning facilitator, a coach, in schools to support that learning process of teachers in order to increase student learning. Coaches focus on refining teaching to improve student learning. When the work of a coach is student results-focused, coaches can make a difference in schools. This is one of the changes emerging in the work of coaches in the last few years.

JSD: What does a good coaching relationship look like?

Killion: A good coaching relationship is one in which the coach and the teacher are willing to talk less at the practice level and more at the belief level. The coach is willing to have very courageous conversations, challenging conversations with teachers about their belief systems and how their beliefs impact their instructional decisions. One of the things that often happens is that coaches are driven primarily by a desire to be liked. (See Killion's article on this topic, "Are you coaching heavy or coaching light?," in the May 2008 issue of *Teachers Teaching Teachers*.) They often avoid the really tough conversations, for example, conversations about equity in a classroom, or gender biases that may be evident, or inadequate

assessment of student learning, or unwillingness to differentiate for different learners. These are really challenging conversations for coaches to have with teachers, and they are particularly challenging if the coach's motive is to not disturb the status quo in any way.

I recognize that developing these relationships takes time. I meet coaches in schools who say over and over again that it takes time to build these relationships. Sometimes, though, they spend too much time doing that. Coaches can easily find that a whole school year has passed before they've attempted a single challenging conversation. I want to encourage people to recognize that a challenging conversation about a teacher's belief system can be one of the best ways to build a strong relationship.

JSD: What has to be in place in the school environment for coaches to recognize these are the kinds of conversations they need to have and also to give them the skills to be able to do it?

Killion: Coaches need plenty of practice and opportunity for professional development around having those conversations. On a more basic level, I still see a lot of coaching programs that don't have an adequate framework for success. This would include simple things like a good job description for a coach or even adequate preparation and ongoing support for coaches. Those are all essential. Training for principals in how to interact and support coaches in their schools is missing in many districts.

JSD: Do you think the proliferation of coaches indicates that job-embedded professional learning is more widespread than it was 10 to 20 years ago?

Killion: I do. People recognize that the school is the site for adult learning and are beginning to place the resources at the school site to support that learning. We can train people in districtwide workshops or other workshops away from school and give them a foundational knowledge and build their skill, but that kind of learning process has limits. That isn't sufficient to produce changes in behavior, and we need changes in behavior to produce changes in student learning.

It's true that I can go to a districtwide workshop, a university course, a workshop away from the district, and I can learn about informational reading, I can learn about strategies for teaching informational reading, I can learn where the resources are. But I don't have access to support to take that knowledge and those skills and move them into practice, unless something has been specifically established to provide classroom-based support. That's what the coach does at the school site. Coaches can help teachers take the knowledge that they gain from those learning experiences, which are necessary and important, bring them into the school and into their classrooms, and now begin to talk about how to use this knowledge to change the way they teach and have an impact on students' learning.

JSD: In schools with strong professional learning communities, do you think the coach is needed less?

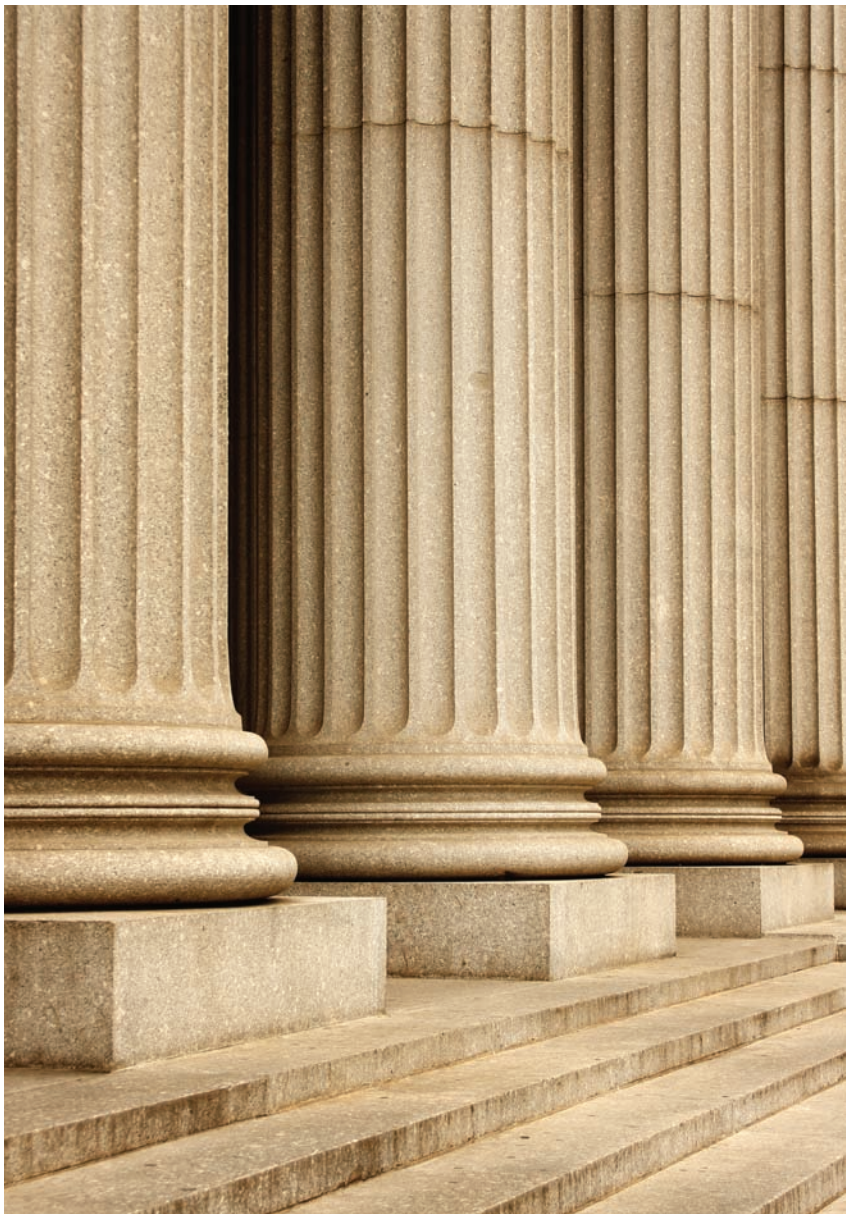
Killion: What's next for coaching, especially in schools with strong professional learning communities, is schools that don't need coaches because everyone will serve as a coach. There won't be a need to have a designated person responsible for leading that work in schools where all teachers have a strong sense of commitment to one another's professional growth, share a collective responsibility about teacher and student success, and have strategies for learning and leading learning. We're a long way from seeing that in our schools, and there are some schools that are ready to explore making that shift. The trick will be to figure out how to make sure that all teachers have access to strategies, processes, and protocols, to learning and to lead learning among their peers. Traditionally in schools there is some kind of hierarchy where that work falls to the grade-level or department chair, a coach, or other teacher leaders. It would be delightful to see a time when we didn't have to have multiple layers of leadership and all teachers were leaders, and being a professional educator meant that you were constantly engaged in learning and leading learning. Before we get there, we have to recognize that teachers are capable of leading their own learning and work on developing the expertise in some before we think about how we develop it in everyone. In the meantime, though, we need competent, skillful coaches who not only develop teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical skills, but who are also committed to developing leadership skills and sharing leadership with other teachers. ■

I recognize that developing these relationships takes time. I meet coaches in schools who say over and over again that it takes time to build these relationships. Sometimes, though, they spend too much time doing that.

4 practices serve as PILLARS *for* ADULT LEARNING

Learning-oriented leadership offers a promising way to support growth

BY ELLIE DRAGO-SEVERSON



At a recent workshop I delivered on practices that support adult growth, John, a New York City principal for more than 20 years, captured the others' experiences. "I have a master's degree in educational administration and have taken many courses and workshops on leadership and administration since earning my degree," he said. "None of my coursework focused on understanding how adults learn. I need more knowledge about how I can support adult learning and growth in my school and with the newer principals I mentor." How can we create high-quality learning opportunities for adults with different needs, preferences, and developmental orientations?

Here, I present a new learning-oriented model to support adult development. This model emerged from my research that explored how 25 principals from diverse U.S. schools shape positive school climates and employ practices that support teachers' growth.

WHAT ADULT DEVELOPMENT MEANS

Before introducing four pillar practices that support adult development, I'll share what I mean by adult growth or transformational learning and briefly introduce the theory that informs the pillar practices. Drawing on adult developmental theory, I define growth as "increases in our cognitive, affective (emotional), interpersonal and intrapersonal capacities that enable us to manage better the

complex demands of teaching, learning, leadership, and life" (Drago-Severson, 2004a). An increase in these capacities enables us to take broader perspectives on others and ourselves. The four pillar practices support transformational learning.

CONSTRUCTIVE-DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY

Robert Kegan's (1982, 1994, 2000) constructive-developmental theory informs the learning-oriented model and centers on two fundamental premises: a) We actively make sense of our experiences (constructivism); and b) The ways we make meaning of our experiences can change — grow more complex — over time (developmentalism). Research suggests that in any school or team, it is likely that adults will be making sense of their experiences in developmentally different ways (Drago-Severson, 2004a, 2004b; Kegan, 1994). Therefore, we need to attend to developmental diversity in order to understand and attend to our different ways of knowing.

A person's way of knowing shapes how she understands her role and responsibilities as a teacher, leader, and learner, and how she thinks about what makes a good teacher, what makes a good leader, what constitutes effective teaching practice, and the types of supports and developmental challenges she needs from colleagues to grow from professional learning opportunities. Three different ways of knowing are most common in adulthood: the instrumental, the socializing, and the self-authoring way of knowing.

THE INSTRUMENTAL WAY OF KNOWING

A person who has an instrumental way of knowing has a very concrete orientation to life. Adults who make meaning in this way have a "What do you have that can help me? What do I have that can help you?" perspective and orientation to teaching, learning, and leadership. Instrumental knowers understand that events, processes, and situations have a reality separate from their own point of view, though they understand the world in very concrete terms. Instrumental knowers orient toward following rules and feel supported when others provide specific advice and explicit procedures so that they can accomplish their goals. In general, another person's interests are important only if they interfere with or positively influence one's own. These learners cannot yet fully consider or acknowledge another person's perspective. Principals and teachers can help instrumental knowers grow by creating situations where they must consider multiple perspectives. For example, participating in teams or mentoring relationships — or any pillar practice — can support their growth.

THE SOCIALIZING WAY OF KNOWING

A person who makes meaning mostly with a socializing way of knowing has an enhanced capacity for reflection. Unlike instrumental knowers, socializing knowers have the capacity to think abstractly and to consider other people's opinions and expectations of them. In other words, a socializing knower will subordinate her own needs and desires to the needs and desires of others. These adults are most concerned with understanding other people's feelings and judgments about them and their work. However, she is not yet able to have a perspective on her relationships — the relationships compose her sense of self. Others' approval and acceptance is of utmost importance to socializing knowers. An authority's expectations, for example, become one's own expectations. Interpersonal conflict is almost always experienced as a threat to a socializing knower's self. Colleagues and supervisors can support socializing knowers' growth by encouraging them to share their perspectives about pedagogy, student work, and policies in pairs or small groups before sharing them with a larger group. This will help them to clarify their own beliefs and, over time, to construct their own values and standards, rather than adopting those of others.

ELLIE DRAGO-SEVERSON is a professor of education leadership at Columbia University's Teachers College. Her research and teaching passions include leadership for supporting adult development and qualitative research. You can reach her at drago-severson@tc.edu.

THE SELF-AUTHORING WAY OF KNOWING

Adults with a self-authoring way of knowing have the developmental capacity to generate their own internal value system, and they take responsibility for and ownership of their own internal authority. They can identify abstract values, principles, and longer-term purposes and are able to prioritize and integrate competing values. Self-authoring knowers can assess other people's expectations and demands and compare them to their own internal standards and judgment. The self-authoring knower has grown to have the capacity to reflect on and manage her interpersonal relationships, but is limited by an inability to recognize that other people can legitimately hold completely opposing perspectives that can inform her own. Principals and colleagues can support self-authoring knowers' growth by

A person's way of knowing shapes how she understands her role and responsibilities as a teacher, leader, and learner, and how she thinks about what makes a good teacher, what makes a good leader, what constitutes effective teaching practice.

gently challenging them to let go of their own perspectives and embrace alternative, diametrically opposing points of view that can inform her own.

PILLAR PRACTICES TO SUPPORT GROWTH

Principals who participated in my research used four practices to support transformational learning or growth: teaming, providing others with leadership roles, collegial inquiry, and mentoring. These pillar practices support adults with different ways of knowing. Each practice centers on adult collaboration and creates opportunities to engage in reflective practice as a tool for professional and personal growth.

1. TEAMING

All of these principals used teaming to promote personal and organizational learning and capacity building through adult collaboration. Many organized their schools for teamwork and created curriculum, literacy, technology, teaching, and diversity teams to support adult development. They described how teaming opens communication, decreases isolation, enables them to share leadership, helps to overcomes adults' resistance to change, and enhances implementation of changes. In teams, adults questioned their own and other people's assumptions about evaluating curricula and student work, shared philosophies of teaching and learning, discussed schools' missions, and made decisions collaboratively. Working in teams creates a safe place for adults to share perspectives and challenge each other's thinking and provides a context for growth.

Each pillar practice centers on adult collaboration and creates opportunities to engage in reflective practice as a tool for professional and personal growth.

Voicing opinions can be risky for individuals with different ways of knowing. Adults with different ways of knowing will experience teaming differently and will benefit from team members offering different kinds of supports and challenges for growth. For example, instrumental knowers will need supports and developmentally appropriate challenges to be able to consider multiple perspectives. Adults who are socializing knowers can find teaming uncomfortable initially, especially when conflict around ideas emerges. They will need encouragement to understand that conflict can be a means to developing more effective solutions to dilemmas. In contrast, learning from dialogue and conflict is stimulating and growth-enhancing to self-authoring knowers. Encouraging these adults to consider perspectives that oppose their own supports their growth.

2. PROVIDING LEADERSHIP ROLES

In many of these schools, teachers, staff, and administrators were invited to embrace leadership roles. The principals reported that leadership roles provided teachers — and themselves — with opportunities for transformational learning. Principals understood this practice as inviting teachers to share authority and ideas as teachers, curriculum developers, or administrators worked toward building community, sharing leadership, and promoting change. Working with others in a leadership role helps adults uncover their assumptions and test out new ways of working as professionals.

As with teaming, assuming leadership roles is experienced differently by teachers — and all adults, for that matter — with different ways of knowing. While those who are challenged by assuming their own authority — instrumental and socializing knowers — will initially require considerable support as they take on new leadership roles, self-authoring knowers will appreciate the opportunity to put their ideas into action and to offer their ideas for improving school initiatives.

3. COLLEGIAL INQUIRY

Collegial inquiry is shared dialogue with the purpose of helping people becoming more aware of their assumptions, beliefs, and convictions about their work and those of colleagues. Principals used this practice to engage adults in conflict resolution, goal setting, decision making, and learning about key educational issues, such as diversity. Creating situations for adults to regularly think and talk about practice encourages self-analysis and can improve individual and school or systemwide practices.

Collegial inquiry provides adults with opportunities to develop more complex perspectives through listening to and learning from their own and others' perspectives. Examples include: (1) reflecting privately in writing in response to probing questions, followed by discussion; (2) collaborating in the process of goal setting and evaluation with others; (3) responding to questions related to a school's mission and instructional practices; and (4) reflecting collectively in conflict-resolution meetings.

Adults with different ways of knowing will need different supports and challenges in order to engage in collegial inquiry as a growth-enhancing practice. Let's look at one common example — the goal-setting process — and consider how adults with different ways of knowing will need different kinds of supports and challenges. Instrumental knowers will assume that a supervisor knows what the right goals are and should tell them. Leaders can support growth by offering example goals and encouraging adults to move toward more abstract goals. Providing step-by-step directions to achieve goals will be a support. Socializing knowers expect

that someone in a position of authority knows what the best goals are for them. While these knowers generate some goals internally, they need to be encouraged to voice them, and eventually, to separate them from those of others. Self-authoring knowers, on the other hand, will form their own goals. Such knowers can be challenged to grow through a process that helps them become less invested in their own goals and able to look at a variety of alternatives.

4. MENTORING

Mentoring or coaching creates an opportunity for broadening perspectives, examining assumptions, and sharing expertise and leadership and can be a more private way to support adult development. It takes many forms, including pairing experienced teachers with new teachers or university interns, pairing teachers who have deep knowledge of school mission with other teachers, and group mentoring. Principals talked about how mentoring program purposes varied from "mission spreading" to exchanging information to providing emotional support to new and experienced teachers and/or staff. One essential element in structuring mentoring relationships is to consider the fit between the mentor and mentee and the fit between the principal's expectations for teachers and teachers' developmental capacities to engage in this practice.

Our ways of knowing will influence what we expect of and need from mentors and influence the kinds of supports and challenges that will help us grow. For example, instrumental knowers will feel supported by mentors who help them meet their concrete needs and goals with step-by-step procedures. Over time, however, a mentor can support growth by encouraging her mentee to move beyond what he sees as the right goals or right way to do things and toward engaging in open-ended discussion about alternative and perhaps more abstract goals.

Pillar practices take into account how a person makes meaning of her experience in order to grow from participation in them.

A socializing knower, on the other hand, will feel best supported by a mentor's explicit acknowledgment of the importance of his beliefs and ideas. Feeling supported by mentors will enable these adults to take greater learning risks. Mentors can gently support a mentee's growth by encouraging her to voice her own perspective before learning about other people's perspectives. Self-authoring knowers will feel best supported by mentors who enable them to learn about diverse perspectives, critique and analyze their own and their mentor's perspectives, goals, and practices. Mentors can encourage these adults to move away from their investment in their own philosophy without feeling internally conflicted (Drago-Severson, in press).

The way in which adult learners engage in these practices or any from of collaborative work will vary according to how we make sense of our experiences — our ways of knowing. With appropriate supports and challenges, though, we can grow and participate in these processes and the life of schools even more effectively.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP

Learning-oriented school leadership assists adults in developing capacities to manage the complexities of teaching and leadership in 21st-century schools. This work offers four key lessons:

- A developmental perspective helps with understanding that adults will experience learning opportunities in different ways.
- A developmental vocabulary helps us to move away from labeling adults based on behaviors.
- Implementing any one of the pillar practices can support adult development.
- Adults need different supports and challenges, which can be embedded in the four pillar practices, in order to grow.

The pillar practices take into account how a person makes meaning of her experience in order to grow from participation in them. While there might be different reasons for adults' preferences for particular practices (e.g. age, career phase), leaders would be wise to consider adults' ways of knowing. Learning-oriented leadership offers a promising way to support adult growth and, in turn, improvement of practice.

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Video observation form

"A lesson in teaching, starring you," on p. 39 of this issue of *JSD*, describes how a group of high school science teachers recorded their own lessons to examine and reflect on practice.

See the September issue of *Teachers Teaching Teachers* for more information about using these professional learning strategies.

PURPOSE:

To give viewers a **common focus** for what to look for in the video.

To discuss **observational consistency** or reliability among observers.

To develop an **eye for evidence** of effective teaching and learning.

To identify **specific action** steps for applying what was learned.

INSTRUCTIONS:

While you watch the video, record any specific teacher behaviors, practices, or strategies that stand out *and* the corresponding student behaviors. During the post-video discussion, note how you would modify, adapt, or improve on what you observed, as well as any questions or comments.

NAME/TOPIC OF VIDEO:

Source: *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning, 2nd Edition,* by Lois Brown Easton (Ed.). Oxford, OH: NSDC, 2008. Order through the NSDC online bookstore, http://store.nsdc.org.

TEACHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVED IN VIDEO	STUDENT BEHAVIORS OBSERVED IN VIDEO
EXAMPLE: • The teacher uses a graphic organizer to model past-tense verb endings. • Most of the students are English language learners. • She speaks fast for English language learners. • She uses advanced academic language such as "conjugate the verb."	EXAMPLE: • The students call out answers to help the teacher complete the graphic organizer. • They are able to follow the teacher's instructions and actively respond to prompts and questions. • Students use the graphic organizer to write about what they did over the weekend.

MODIFICATIONS, ADAPTATIONS, OR IMPROVEMENTS

EXAMPLE: Even though the students in the video were able to follow the teacher's instructions, I would write challenging or unfamiliar academic terms on the board so my students both hear and read the terms.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

EXAMPLE: I want to know what the research says about the rate of speaking when working with English language learners. A number of people in the group felt the teacher's rate of speech was normal and that the students were able to understand. I still think it might have been too fast. The teacher took the time to explicitly model how to use the graphic organizer when writing.

ACTION PLAN AND EVIDENCE

EXAMPLE: I want to co-construct a graphic organizer that targets a specific writing objective with my students and model how to use the information in the graphic organizer when they are writing. I will bring in pre- and post-writing samples from Julia O. for the group to analyze when we meet in two weeks.

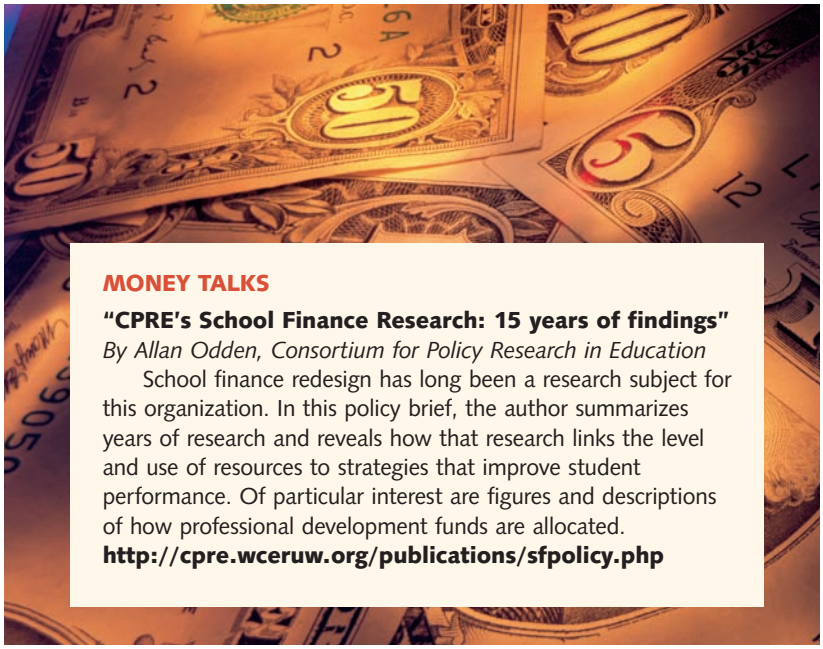
snapshots

A QUICK GLIMPSE AT RECENT RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

A BLOG TO BOOKMARK

TLN Teacher Voices
Teacher Leaders Network, Center for Teaching Quality

Since 2003, the Teacher Leaders Network Forum has served as a forum for virtual collaboration for an accomplished group of educators. This blog offers daily excerpts from the discussions within the forum, offering readers many perspectives on a range of topics important to teacher leaders.
http://teacherleaders.typepad.com/tln_teacher_voices/



MONEY TALKS

"CPRE's School Finance Research: 15 years of findings"
By Allan Odden, Consortium for Policy Research in Education

School finance redesign has long been a research subject for this organization. In this policy brief, the author summarizes years of research and reveals how that research links the level and use of resources to strategies that improve student performance. Of particular interest are figures and descriptions of how professional development funds are allocated.
http://cpre.wceruw.org/publications/sfpolicy.php

EVIDENCE

Find sources of school data and more strategies for learning from data through these web-based resources.

STANDARDS AND PRACTICE

Surveys of Enacted Curriculum
Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)

This set of data collection tools is used with teachers of mathematics, science, and English language arts (K-12) to collect and report consistent data on current instructional practices and content being taught in classrooms. The resulting data provide an objective method for educators to analyze the degree of alignment between current instruction and state standards and assessments.
www.ccsso.org/projects/Surveys_of_Enacted_Curriculum/

VALUABLE DOWNLOADS

Education for the Future: Using Data to Improve Student Learning

Education for the Future is a not-for-profit initiative that focuses on working with schools, districts, state departments of education, and other educational service centers and agencies on systemic change and comprehensive data analyses that lead to increased student learning. The project director, Victoria Bernhardt, offers several valuable books, articles, and data use tools through the download center of this web site.
http://eff.csuchico.edu/home/

FOCUS ON POLICY

"Democracy at risk: The need for a new federal policy in education"
The Forum for Education and Democracy, April 2008

Written by prominent educators and policy experts, this report says that the U.S. needs to transform the federal government's role in education to meet student achievement and equity goals. The report recommends four key strategies, including investing in a plan to improve the preparation and professional development of teachers and school leaders, with emphasis on high-need fields and locations.
www.forumforeducation.org

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

"Teacher professional learning and development: Best evidence synthesis iteration"
By Helen Timperley, Aaron Wilson, Heather Barrar, and Irene Fung, New Zealand Ministry of Education, December 2007

With a focus on teacher learning and its impact on student achievement, this is one of a series of reports that synthesizes research to explain what works to improve education outcomes. The authors examined research to attempt to clarify what impact particular professional learning opportunities have on teaching practice.
www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2515/15341/

RAPID TURNAROUNDS

"Turning around chronically low-performing schools: IES practice guide"
National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, May 2008

This guide offers specific recommendations for educators who seek to quickly improve student achievement in low-performing schools. The authors clearly describe the type of research that informed their recommendations and also offer details on how the recommendations will unfold in a school setting. Within the recommendations, the authors address professional learning, leadership, and data-driven decision making, among other topics.
http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/practiceguides/

TOOLS FOR POLICY MAKERS

Data Quality Campaign: Using Data to Improve Student Achievement

This initiative is a national collaborative effort to encourage and support state policy makers to improve the collection, availability, and use of high-quality education data and to implement state longitudinal data systems to improve student achievement. The campaign aims to provide tools and resources that will assist state development of quality longitudinal data systems. Of particular interest to principals is a recent report, "Tapping into the power of longitudinal data," which demonstrates how using state-level data can be beneficial at the district and building level.
www.dataqualitycampaign.org

CLOSING THE GAP

The Education Trust

While this organization works on many fronts to raise expectations and opportunities for students, a critical piece of their work is the dissemination of data. Browse or search through the Dispelling the Myth or Education Watch databases and read a variety of reports that reveal those districts that are closing achievement gaps across the country.
www2.edtrust.org

CHECK THE FACTS

National Center for Education Statistics

As a part of the U.S. Department of Education, NCES collects and analyzes education data. Information from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is available here, as are data from the Schools and Staffing Survey and many other federal data analysis projects.
http://nces.ed.gov/

theme / EXAMINING EVIDENCE

Passion and principle ground effective data use.

The meaningful use of data for school improvement requires much more than skill with numbers. Educators also need a strong moral purpose to improve school for all students. The authors share six critical assumptions that guide their work in helping schools develop collaborative inquiry processes for using data.

By Nancy Love, Katherine E. Stiles, Susan Mundry, and Kathryn DiRanna

Data dialogue: *Focused conversations put evidence to work in the classroom.*

Discussions about data can take many forms across districts, schools, and teams. Each type of discussion serves a different purpose, uses different data, and requires specific support and participants. School-based examples illustrate the various data conversations.

By Cindy Harrison and Chris Bryan

Mix it up: *Variety is key to a well-rounded data-analysis plan.*

Test scores and benchmarks are not the only sources of evidence. Professional learning strategies that give educators another lens on student learning and school process data include tuning protocols, accessing student voices, and classroom walk-throughs.

By Lois Brown Easton

Tools of engagement: *Sharing evidence of student engagement sparks changes in teacher practice.*

At the J. Erik Jonsson School in Dallas, Texas, student engagement is part of the formula for success. Teachers and researchers collected data on particular teacher actions and student behaviors to determine which practices contribute to improved learning and productive relationships. This research resulted in changes in teaching and student learning.

By Ann Minnett, Mike Murphy, Sandy Nobles, and Trina Taylor

Empowerment zone: *Texas school beats the odds with a shared commitment to student learning.*

Teachers and leaders at the newly opened Velasquez Elementary School in Richmond, Texas, use collaborative planning and continuous learning to put student learning first. Through a series of strategic interventions, this school team improved student performance and brightened schoolwide morale.

By Timothy Berkey and Elizabeth Dow

It's not just *any* day: *When the sun rises on D-Day at one rural district, educators meet to disaggregate the data.*

After establishing a foundation of knowledge among all educators, leaders in Boone County Schools in rural West Virginia offered staff the option to participate in a day of examining data in teams. As a result, teacher practices changed and student test scores rose.

By Lisa D. Beck

A lesson in teaching, starring you.

Participants in a project-based learning project for professional development in science used video to record, discuss, and reflect on their teaching practices. With the evidence on the screen in front of them, teachers had a detailed perspective on specific actions and used the evidence to change their actions, with positive results for students.

By Tom J. McConnell, Meilan Zhang, Matt J. Koehler, Mary A. Lundeberg, Mark Urban-Lurain, Joyce M. Parker, and Jan Eberhardt

Striking a balance: *Georgia district adds assessments and transforms classroom practice.*

When Forsyth County Schools (Ga.) added benchmarking to their assessment repertoire, ongoing reflection and dialogue across teams and schools became the norm. The benchmark assessments are just one facet of a balanced plan that emphasizes both summative and formative measures.

By Lissa Pijanowski

features

Courage, confidence, clarity mark the pathway to change: *An interview with Joellen Killion.*

In two of her major professional emphases, NSDC's deputy executive director pushes for effective implementation of professional learning. Through coaches, schools provide the support that practitioners need to put new strategies into practice. Ongoing evaluation of professional learning ensures that schools and districts create a plan and measure their progress frequently.

By Tracy Crow

4 practices serve as pillars for adult learning.

Adult learners can be categorized by their different ways of knowing: instrumental, socializing, and self-authoring. The author outlines professional learning practices that support all learners and describes the supports that make these practices effective in a variety of contexts.

By Ellie Drago-Severson

coming up

In Winter 2008 *JSD*: **What works in professional development**

forum / QUANNAH PARKER-McGOWAN

A LESSON LEARNED FROM STUDENTS

Three years ago, I stepped out of the comfort zone of a private East Coast college and into the harsh, gritty world of inner-city Los Angeles. I became a middle school teacher to students with special needs. At the time, I did not realize that this job would challenge, turn upside-down, and ultimately change many beliefs I thought I held before I stepped over the threshold.

Situated near the Watts Towers, epicenter of the 1965 riots, and surrounded by four public housing projects, it is a school with peeling paint, graffiti, and young souls crying. It is the stereotypical inner-city school, plagued with the problems of violence, gangs, teen pregnancy, and poverty. It is a school that is part of the urban cycle of underachievement and dreams destined to die before adulthood.


Parker-McGowan

I became a teacher here to try to help break the cycle, to give my students a voice and a chance. I did not realize that, along with being an educator, I was about to become a mother, a father, a probation officer, a counselor, an advocate, and a friend. I did not realize the impact my students would have on my heart.

In addition to living in a neighborhood they call a ghetto, my students have disabilities ranging from dyslexia to autism to cerebral palsy and mental retardation. Looking at most, you would not be able to say they have a disability. You would not know that not one of my 8th graders can read above a 3rd-grade level, that some are working to spell their name while others are working to control their anger. Many are leaders in the school, some excel in class, some excel at gangbanging. They are each unique, and they have each taught me something.

When I first started teaching, I was angry: angry at the situation my students were living in, angry at their disabilities. I wanted to smash down the wall of autism that locked Jane inside herself. I wanted to wrench cerebral palsy from the bones of Michael. I wanted to rewire a neural circuit to make the letters on the page of a book stop dancing for Anne.

Anger soon melted away into a state of sheer exhaustion. I was tired of fighting what seemed to be an endless battle. I was tired of looking into the eyes of students and seeing a hardness that no 14-year-old should possess. I was tired of hearing about the latest shooting in the neighborhood, the latest lockdown that the school had to go on because of shots fired nearby. I felt like I had taken on something much larger than myself, something that not a single individual could help to fix.

Somewhere between grading papers and fretting about the state of the world, the fog lifted and I began to see my students as kids. Yes, they are kids who have been shortchanged of many things simply by being born in the wrong place at the wrong time. Yes, they are kids who have been put at a disadvantage because they were born with a disability. And yes, they are kids who still possess potential and the ability to teach me every day.

My students have taught me that life can still be beautiful when it is tipped on its side. My students have taught me that permanence is not real, and each moment must be lived. My students have changed my belief of what success really is. I no longer believe that success is the perfect job, the big salary, or the best house. Success is living up to your full potential. It is acknowledging your faults, learning your strengths, and believing that you can overcome.

When I leave my teaching position this summer to pursue another degree back on the East Coast, I will feel guilty. A part of me will feel like I am giving up before I should, like I am abandoning my students even though they will be moving on to high school. Then I will remind myself that I am not truly leaving them. For the past three years, I have given everything I had to my students, and in turn they have left an impression on me greater than any essay could describe.

I no longer believe that success is the perfect job, the big salary, or the best house.

I may have taught them lessons in math, science, and history, but they taught me lessons in perseverance, faith, and success. This I believe. ■