

## theme / WHAT WORKS

**What works, works everywhere:** Q&A with Michael Barber.

Successful school systems around the world use similar practices, including promoting an ethic of continuous learning. A leading international reformer shares insights on effective professional learning, how the U.S. can improve schooling, and the importance of carefully developing school leaders.

By Tracy Crow

**Coaching:** The key to translating research into practice lies in continuous, job-embedded learning with ongoing support.

Interest in school-based coaching has increased dramatically in recent years. Though there are several distinct coaching approaches, they share several commonalities and rely on similar conditions for success. The research on coaching highlights key benefits to this learning strategy.

By Jim Knight

**Data use:** Data-driven decision making takes a big-picture view of the needs of teachers and students.

Schools that incorporate comprehensive data analysis plans as part of an overall school improvement initiative are likely to see impressive gains in student achievement. One school's journey to success using data showcases specific data use practices.

By Victoria L. Bernhardt

**Leadership development:** Schools and districts seeking high performance need strong leaders.

The development of school leaders at all levels is critical to improving schools. As districts support aspiring leaders, critical elements include focused learning experiences, mentors, standards to guide performance, and reflection on practice.

By Cheryl Gray and Quentin Bishop

**New teacher support:** A comprehensive induction program can increase teacher retention and improve performance.

Districts shape a variety of new teacher support programs. Significant elements in successful initiatives include high-quality mentoring, principal support, and ongoing professional learning opportunities. An example from an elementary school in Arizona makes the case for quality induction.

By Kathy Wiebke and Joe Bardin

**Professional learning communities:** Educators work together toward a shared purpose — improved student learning.

Peers learning and working collaboratively create an ideal environment for a constructivist learning approach that benefits both teachers and students. The elements that foster professional learning communities include time, space, use of data, and the careful consideration of community membership.

By Shirley M. Hord

**Workshops:** *Extend learning beyond your presentation with these brain-friendly strategies.*

High-quality training sessions can be a source of powerful professional learning. Twenty effective facilitation strategies ensure that workshops are meaningful and memorable. Specific ideas for how to use these strategies are covered.

*By Marcia L. Tate*

**Reach for the heart as well as the mind:** *Leaders can take action to close the knowing-doing gap.*

Given that schools are generally ineffective at spreading new practices and change is incredibly difficult, leaders need to take purposeful steps to transform schools. Read about six concrete actions for leaders along with the rationale for each.

*By Dennis Sparks*



## features

**Slicing the layers of learning:** *Professional learning communities fill the gaps as educators put new knowledge into practice.*

Two kinds of learning help educators gain and apply new knowledge — macro learning and micro learning. An understanding of different purposes for learning can clarify the appropriate use of traditional and reform-oriented professional development approaches. Professional learning communities are an ideal environment for applying new knowledge.

*By Meredith Curry and Joellen Killian*

## coming up

In Spring 2009 *JSD*: **Building support for professional learning**