

editor's note/

TRACY CROW

LEARNING AT WORK: THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT

I've lucked into a wonderful hairstylist. Not only does John meet my baseline standards — he listens to what I want, he gives me a great haircut, he doesn't expect me to talk a lot — he is also explicit about sharing with me when he is practicing a new skill, and he tells me how he learned it. Not only are he and his colleagues expected to travel periodically to learn from the masters in their field, they also bring back what they've learned and show each other new techniques. Occasionally, the salon owner will bring in someone from outside to teach the whole team at once.

I've found that knowing about John's skill advancement alleviates the pain of paying more when he is promoted to master stylist. I also like knowing that the salon owner banks part of her profit from product sales into a learning fund for the stylists.

We — those of us who work in professional learning — often cite learning models from other professions. In fact, an article in this issue showcases a residency model transferred to teaching. Sometimes we turn to other fields to understand what effective professional learning looks like in other contexts. We want to adapt what we learn from such cases and apply it when appropriate. Or we want to show that what we know is effective in education is also proven in other fields.

Connections like this to the world beyond education are extremely valuable. While all of our stakeholders share a deep commitment to quality education, sometimes we find ourselves in the position of defending professional development. Quality learning for educators has been invisible for too long. Consider the communication tools you use when you speak about professional learning. What connections can you make to the worlds of the people you interact with every day? What can we do to shine a light on the importance of learning to improve what we do?

Our work must become transparent. People need to know that not only is time for learning critical, but so are the results. As mundane as it sounds, we will know we are successful when continuous, job-embedded professional learning is so routine that people don't even think of it as out of the ordinary. By then, the stories we hear of a professional's opportunities to share effective innovations won't apply just to engineering, hairstyling, sales, or dozens of other professions.

I want to note two transitions in this issue of *JSD*. For two years, Lea Arnau has written the standards column, using her deep experience in applying NSDC's standards at the district level to illuminate their importance to everyone who works in the school system. Arnau's last column is published here. She will continue to serve NSDC as Academy coordinator and coach, as a member of the Coaching Academy cadre, and in countless other ways. We will miss her authentic voice in the magazine.

Beginning in this issue, we welcome Susan Scott as a columnist. Scott, the author of *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success in Work & in Life, One Conversation at a Time*, (Penguin, 2002), has worked in a variety of contexts to help people understand that the way they talk together shapes their relationships. We're looking forward to learning with her. ■



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NSDC'S PURPOSE: Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.

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