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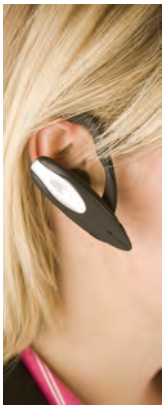

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HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

JSD is published four times a year to promote improvement in the quality of professional learning as a means to improve student learning in K-12 schools. Contributions from members and nonmembers of NSDC are welcome.

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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.

Tracy Crow is associate director of publications. You can contact her at tracy.crow@nsdc.org.

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. ■

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

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NEWS AND NOTES OF THE NATIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

MORE WAYS TO CONNECT THROUGH NSDC

Explore two interactive tools that connect NSDC members to each other and to compelling voices and ideas. Online networks echo three of NSDC's core beliefs:

- Student learning increases when educators reflect on professional practice and student progress.
- Schools' most complex problems are best solved by educators collaborating and learning together.
- Professional learning decisions are strengthened by diversity.

We encourage all members to participate in NSDC's networks. With your expertise and the power of dialog and collaboration, NSDC's networks can truly become communities of practice.

Become a fan today — visit **www.nsdc.org** for a link or find us through Facebook.

FACEBOOK

NSDC has created a Facebook page for members, fans, and the education community. When you become a fan, you'll see NSDC's latest blog postings, get our take on news and issues affecting teachers and schools, and stay up-to-date on our latest announcements. You'll also be able to connect quickly with other members of the NSDC community. Anyone can create a free Facebook account. In an ongoing effort to reach educators where they're already gathering, NSDC will take advantage of Facebook and other convenient Web 2.0 tools that provide value to members and share our message to a larger audience.

Find the latest blog posts on **www.nsdc.org.**

NSDC BLOG

Add your voice to the blogosphere! Respond to such writers as Stephanie Hirsh, Hayes Mizell, and Jim Knight as they bring to light immediate challenges and address ongoing questions in school improvement. NSDC's blog offers opportunities to consider school-based issues as well as policy topics.

powerful WORDS

A goal without a plan is just a wish.

— Antoine de Saint-Exupery

FROM NSDC'S BLOG

FROM JOELLEN KILLION: **Coaches' impact directly tied to planning**

The addition of coaches to a school staff has the potential for powerful transformation of teaching and student learning, but only if they're utilized properly.

FROM M. RENÉ ISLAS: **Drive reform or save jobs? New DoE document outlines priorities**

Yesterday, the Department of Education released a guidance document calling for bold new education reforms. Will it be enough to influence how states and districts use their ARRA money?

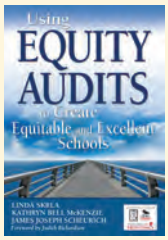
FROM JIM KNIGHT: **Where does the time go? Six steps to more effective time management**

Few things are more important than how we manage our time. If we choose our actions intentionally and focus our energy on what really counts, truly we will live more meaningful days. Educators, with so many competing demands on their time, especially understand the need to manage time effectively.

Conduct equity audits with latest book club selection

NSDC members who have added the NSDC Book Club to their membership package will receive *Using Equity Audits to Create Equitable and Excellent Schools* by Lynda Skrla, Kathryn Bell-McKenzie, and James Joseph Scheurich.

Written by well-known experts in the areas of equity and achievement, this book expands school leaders' understanding of how to interpret data in order to make equity audits work and provides practical strategies for using this school assessment approach to help ensure a high-quality education for all students, regardless of socioeconomic class.



Grounded solidly in theory, this book demonstrates how audits can help not only in developing fair programs that provide all students with the opportunity to reach their potential but also for hiring, training, and retaining good teachers.

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 Equity Audits to Create Equitable and Excellent Schools*, you must add the NSDC Book Club to your membership before July 15. The book will be mailed to NSDC Book Club members in July. For more information about this or any membership package, call NSDC at 800-727-7288 or e-mail NSDCoffice@nsdc.org.

on board / CHARLES MASON

HARD TIMES CALL FOR BEST PRACTICE

In "How to Manage Your Business in a Recession" in the January 2009 issue of *Fortune* magazine, Geoff Colvin observed, "For virtually all companies, a critical part of the core is the continual development of employees. Yet it's remarkable how many businesses cut training and development in a downturn. The best never do."

Those of us in education can translate Colvin's contention to, "It's discouraging how many school systems cut professional development in a downturn. The best never do."

School systems across the country are struggling to balance budgets, often with professional development being among the first things to go. When times are tough and everything is on the table for scrutiny, we have an opening to take the following steps.

Charles Mason is president of the National Staff Development Council.

1. Advocate for professional learning as an indispensable part of our business. What school system does not claim to have improved student learning as its highest priority? If that is true, why cut funding for something that, when done right, clearly improves student learning? With the release of NSDC's report, *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession*, the research base for the link between professional learning and student learning is clearer than ever before. The first key finding in the report states, "Sustained and intensive professional development for teachers is related to student achievement gains." Share this persuasive study with principals, superintendents, board members, and community members.

2. Advocate for best practice. If we are going to argue that professional development is critical, then we better be certain that we are supporting practice that affects student learning. Again, the new study is invaluable, laying out the characteristics of effective professional learning as "intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice; focuses on the teaching and learning of specific academic content; is connected to other school initiatives; and builds strong working relationships among teachers." Let's be sure we are advocating for what really works.

3. Abandon bad practice. We can be both responsible and persuasive when we willingly redirect funds that are being spent on demonstrably ineffective activities such as back-to-school motivational speakers, one-shot workshops without follow-up, and teacher grants that have no common focus. We know what works. Let's quit supporting things that don't.

4. Capitalize on federal stimulus funds. As policy makers and system leaders make decisions in our states and school systems on the use of federal stimulus funds, let's be sure we understand the ways in which those funds can be targeted for professional development, and design effective, persuasive proposals that can result in new funding for the development of our employees.

Will your district follow the conventional wisdom and cut professional learning in hard times? Or will you be one of the best who never do? ■

NSDC FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES 2009 AWARD RECIPIENTS

NSDC's foundation, Impacting the Future Now, has awarded more than $17,000 in monetary and in-kind donations to support participation in NSDC's premier learning opportunities. In evaluating applications, the foundation emphasizes the importance of assisting high-needs schools. The award categories and recipients for 2009 are:

CHIDLEY SCHOLARSHIPS: The Childley Scholarships provide funding to support participation in NSDC's Academy for Staff Developers. This year, the foundation awarded three Chidley Scholarships.

Takisha Weatherall-Jones is the professional development coordinator for Milwaukee Public Schools. She will use her Academy experience to develop a comprehensive professional development plan for the district.

Ann Barysh is a social studies/history curriculum coach at the middle and high schools in Randolph (Mass.) Public Schools. Barysh will use her experience in the Academy to engage teachers in ongoing collaboration, professional feedback, and data use, establishing high expectations for student success.

IMPACTING *the* FUTURE NOW FOUNDATION

A. Clifton Myles is the coordinator of professional development for DeKalb County Schools in Georgia. He intends to establish a framework for a three-year program of study built around a theory of change, using professional learning community to lead the transformation.

E6 GRANT: The E6 Grant supports a team's efforts to advance NSDC's purpose. The grant awards up to $5,000 and the registration fee for the three-day NSDC Annual Conference for three members of the project team.

This year's E6 Grant is awarded to **Jordan-Elbridge High School** in Jordan, N.Y. The project will provide professional learning for teachers to develop curriculum for 21st-century courses, particularly for those students who will move directly into the workforce in the local community.

The foundation's support to last year's Bridge Builder multiyear award winner also continues. Over the past two years, the foundation's financial awards total more than $38,000.

Impacting the Future Now is a foundation dedicated to supporting a new generation of leaders who act on their belief that continuous learning by educators is essential to improving the achievement of all students.

To make a contribution to Impacting the Future Now, visit **www.nsdc.org/getinvolved/foundation.cfm.**

NSDC CALENDAR

July 19-22: NSDC's 5th Summer Conference for Teacher Leaders and the Administrators Who Support Them, Boston, Mass.

July: Registration opens for NSDC's 41st Annual Conference in St. Louis, Mo., in December 2009.

Aug. 15: Deadline for submitting manuscripts for Summer 2010 *JSD*. Theme: Using technology for professional learning. **www.nsdc.org/news/jsd/themes.cfm.**

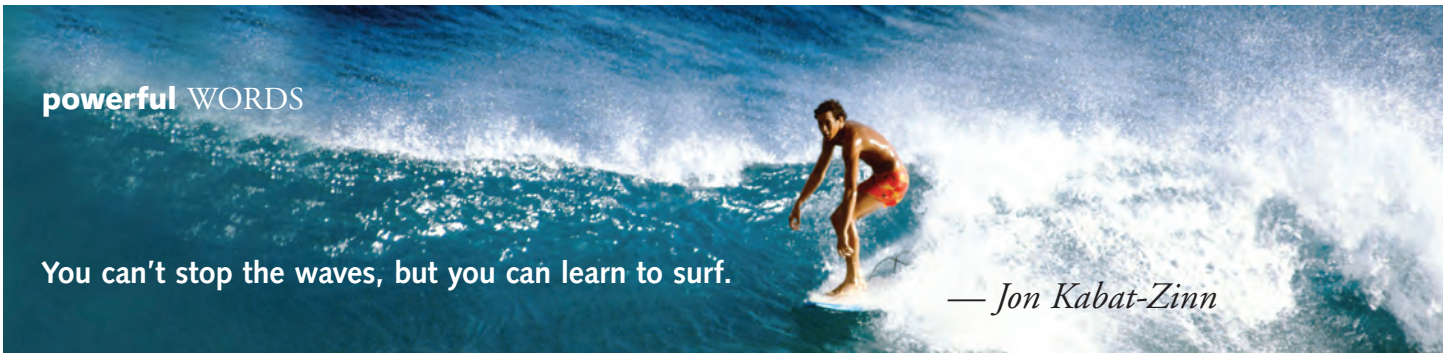
September: Election for NSDC Board of Trustees

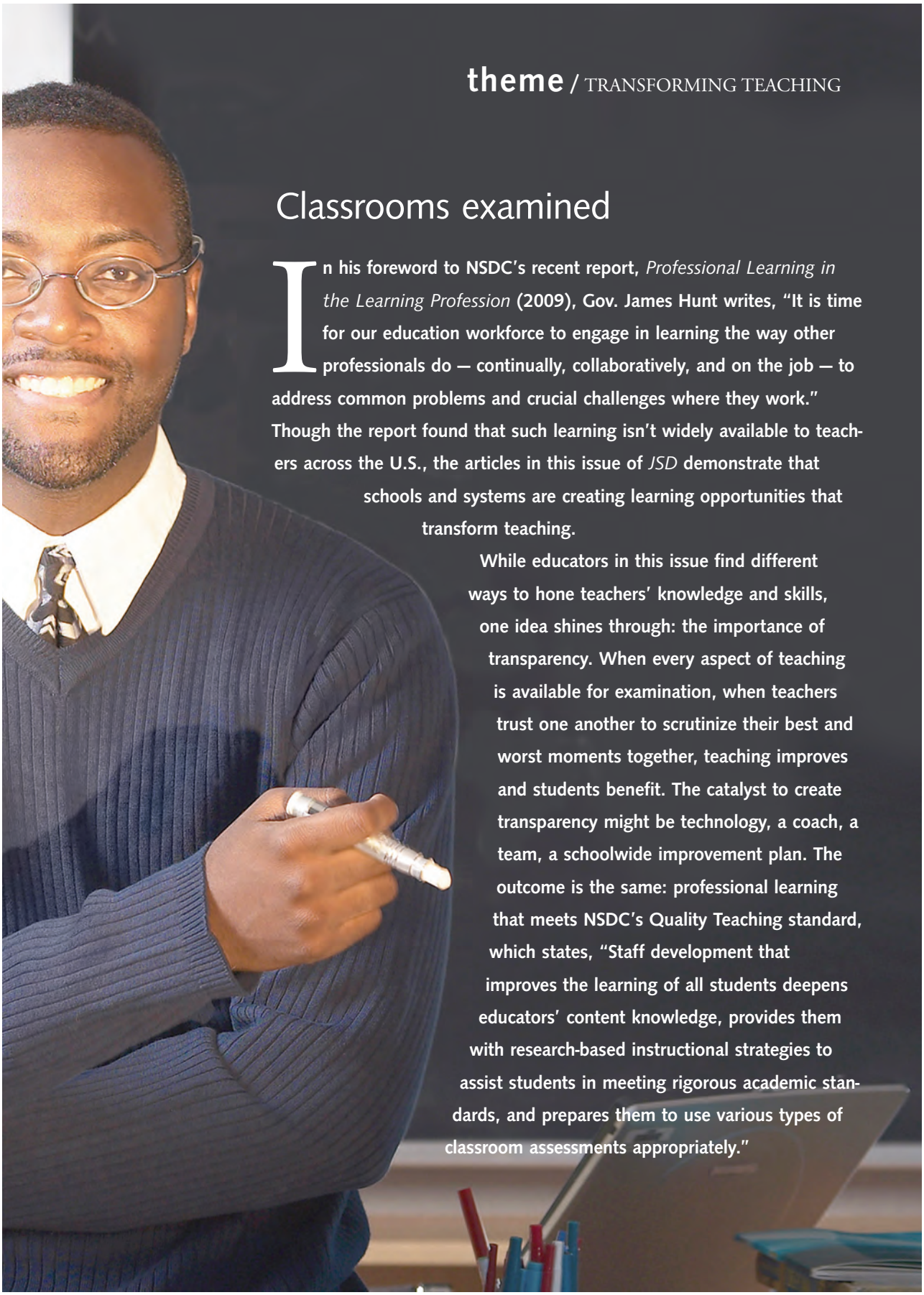
Oct. 2: Deadline for proposals to present at NSDC's 6th Summer Conference in Seattle, Wash., in July 2010.

Oct. 12: Early registration deadline for 2009 Annual Conference.

Nov. 15: Deadline for submitting manuscripts for Fall 2010 *JSD*. Theme: The new central office. **www.nsdc.org/news/jsd/themes.cfm**

Dec. 5-9: NSDC's 41st Annual Conference, St. Louis, Mo.





Classrooms examined

In his foreword to NSDC's recent report, *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession* (2009), Gov. James Hunt writes, "It is time for our education workforce to engage in learning the way other professionals do — continually, collaboratively, and on the job — to address common problems and crucial challenges where they work." Though the report found that such learning isn't widely available to teachers across the U.S., the articles in this issue of *JSD* demonstrate that schools and systems are creating learning opportunities that transform teaching.

While educators in this issue find different ways to hone teachers' knowledge and skills, one idea shines through: the importance of transparency. When every aspect of teaching is available for examination, when teachers trust one another to scrutinize their best and worst moments together, teaching improves and students benefit. The catalyst to create transparency might be technology, a coach, a team, a schoolwide improvement plan. The outcome is the same: professional learning that meets NSDC's Quality Teaching standard, which states, "Staff development that improves the learning of all students deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately."

WHO'S THAT TEACHER?

Matrix shows how to support teachers at different levels

BY GARY WADDELL

A principal makes countless decisions during the school year, ranging from bus routes to discipline, curriculum alignment to master schedules. It doesn't take long to realize that the majority of these decisions pale in comparison to decisions about how to select and support highly skilled teachers. What teachers know about teaching and learning, how well they know their students, and their capacity to provide powerful learning experiences form the core of students' school experience. Nothing matters more.

My experiences as a counselor listening to students and as a principal focused on increasing teacher capacity led me to wonder why some teachers were wildly effective with nearly any student they encountered while others failed miserably in reaching students academically or socially and emotionally. The best teachers engaged students academically while connecting with them emotionally in ways that created profound differences in both experience and results for their students. Sadly, I found these master teachers to be the exception rather than the rule. This experience led me to question the differences I observed in teachers and the implication of those differences for designing professional learning. I wanted a way to identify and support master teachers.

AXIS ONE: KNOWING THEIR STUFF

The first necessary capacity of

GARY WADDELL is curriculum services administrator for the San Mateo County Office of Education in Redwood City, Calif. He formerly served as a school administrator in California and North Carolina. You can contact him at gary.waddell@mac.com.

highly skilled teachers concerns content knowledge and effective instructional practice. These teachers know their stuff. They have solid mastery of their content and hold a clear understanding of the academic standards or competencies against which student success is measured. Beyond this content knowledge, they are adept with powerful instructional strategies and are nimble in their use. They know, for example, how to present new material, to preteach, and reteach. They skillfully assess student understanding and provide subsequent differentiated instruction based on that assessment. They are comfortable with students with weak academic skills, English language learners, students with special needs, or advanced students. These are skilled educators with whom nearly any student will progress academically.

At their best, these teachers form their schools' instructional core and are master teachers in the purest sense of the word. They are the bedrock of any effective school. Students learn from them and love them. At their worst, they are academic technicians, teachers about whom the common school lore is, "Well, the student will learn something, but he won't necessarily like it." Teachers who are strong in these content and instructional competencies fall somewhere along the continuum from technician to master teacher as a consequence of their will and skill to know and connect with their students in meaningful ways.

AXIS TWO: KNOWING THEIR STUDENTS

Teachers who achieve mastery along this axis know their students well. They know and value their students as individuals as well as in the context of their family, racial, and cultural groups. They have a deep understanding of the distinction between equity and equality. They understand that equity involves each student getting what he or she needs rather than each student merely getting the same thing.

These teachers understand what motivates students. They create connections with their students and understand and value their experiences. They are able referees and guides for not only the academic but also students' social and emotional growth. These are the teachers with whom hard-to-reach students thrive. They connect with students and parents and tend to establish strong connections with both. They do more than give lip service to their commitment to students — they live it. They know and are known to their students.

Student-focused educators range from highly effective teachers who motivate and inspire students in mastering rigorous content to those who are nurturers but lack the content knowledge or instructional savvy to provide their students with the academic structure required to achieve academic success.

THE TEACHER EFFICACY MATRIX

These two distinct skill sets form an axis that describes something essential about teachers, their skill, and the types of professional learning that are appropriate for them. Along axis one is content mastery/pedagogy and along the other is their student focus — their capacity to understand and motivate students. Combined, these skill sets form a matrix with four distinct quadrants. The teachers represented in each are markedly different from each other. Each quadrant suggests not only a different type of teacher, but a different type of supervision and support necessary to move them closer to quadrant IV, the master teacher.

The matrix is a tool for under-

Quadrant IV: THE MASTER TEACHER

Master teacher status is the goal for every teacher. These teachers are what Todd Whitaker (2002) calls "superstars." They are remarkable in their ability to connect with and motivate students in the context of rigorous academic requirements. Their students are academically successful, typically making significant progress regardless of their starting point. Every principal wants to hire such teachers, and every parent wants them for their child. They have a knack for maintaining a mutually clear focus on students' well-being as well as their academic needs.

SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT

Since master teachers tend not to be the subject of parent complaints, student behavioral problems, or staff conflicts, principals are tempted to leave them alone, putting out fires elsewhere and addressing the deficits of lower performers. This is an easy trap for administrators to fall into and one that has troublesome consequences in the long term. Spending time and energy supporting master teachers is one of the best uses of a school administrator's time. These teachers, while highly skilled, too often function in isolation. Providing intentional, targeted support to master teachers contributes significantly to a school climate in which the standard of performance is high. Such support is also motivating to lower-performing teachers.

A core principle for promoting master teaching is to provide support for professional reflection and learning. Master teachers often do not know just how effective they are and are their own worst critics in looking for how they can best reach students. A core element of support for master teachers is to create professional learning communities in which master teachers can connect and collaborate with other high-functioning colleagues. Reducing the isolation and privatization of practice that many master teachers experience provides a vehicle for their ongoing growth as well as serving as a venue for sharing their expertise. Providing thought partners and critical friends through a professional learning community context can be motivating for master teachers.

Likewise, targeted observation and support, most often heaped on lower-performing teachers, can provide a useful context for the deep reflection that master teachers need for continued growth. These teachers are constantly trying new ways to reach and teach students and are hungry for feedback and an opportunity to analyze and debrief their work. The master teacher tends to be a powerful consumer of professional learning and can be an able peer coach. The mere act of a principal spending time and energy in support of a school's master teachers sends a powerful message about what is valued in the school's culture.

standing teachers' skills and needs. Assessment of teachers along the two axes is a function of a teacher's performance with students along both academic and interpersonal constructs. The descriptors of the four quadrants and the teachers who reside in each provide a framework for identifying and supporting teachers.

THE ROAD TO MASTERY

Perhaps no task is more critical for a principal than selecting the right teachers and supporting them appropriately in their growth toward mastery. While no teacher exists purely in any specific quadrant at all times, understanding the quadrant in which a teacher best fits provides a context for understanding what they need to become more effective with and for students. The notion of differentiated supervision and support is not just a good idea for students, but for teachers, too. It provides a framework for administrators and coaches to understand the unique nature and needs of teachers where they are and, more importantly, what is takes to move them toward becoming a master teacher. Students deserve no less.

Quadrant III, the Technician, p. 14
Quadrant II, the Caretaker, p. 16
Quadrant I, the Struggler, p. 16

REFERENCE

Whitaker, T. (2002). *Dealing with difficult teachers (2nd ed.).* New York: Eye on Education. ■

Quadrant III: THE TECHNICIAN

Technicians usually get the job done, though not always with all students. They may appear as traditionalists on a staff, serious and dogmatically focused on academics to the exclusion of all else. Their students frequently achieve academic success, but their classrooms can be cold, businesslike, and impersonal. There is little room for trial and error, and learning occurs, when it does, in the absence of culturally responsive instruction. Typically, their students are neither known as individuals nor are their feelings or racial or cultural identities known and valued. They are teachers who are known for academic rigor but who lack the skill and/or will to meaningfully engage all learners.

SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT

With a critical skill set firmly in place, these teachers know their content and how their students need to be able to perform on measures of academic achievement. A weak understanding or disinterest in their students as individuals and learners holds these teachers back from the levels of excellence associated with master teachers.

Opportunities for explicit learning about student motivation and engagement are ideal for technicians. They benefit from work designed to address their often tenuous understanding of equity and the lived experience of their students as individuals with unique racial and cultural backgrounds. Further, they can benefit from professional learning around the role of deep and responsive differentiation of instruction. These teachers, who place a high value on performance, can be meaningfully paired with master teachers in peer coaching or critical friend roles.

Technicians may become entrenched in their belief that delivering rigorous academic work is their only job, and issues of student motivation and engagement detract from that work. Guiding these teachers through professional learning focused on knowing students as individuals and as learners can be profound. A strategy such as guiding the teacher in analysis of a focus student is a useful frame for learning. Once a struggling student has been identified, the teacher interviews the student to understand the context of his or her life and learning, analyzes the student's progress, and then designs specific interventions for the student. This process can be a powerful tool as teachers move from an analytic stance to understanding the power of knowing and differentiating for their students.

Quadrant II: THE CARETAKER

Caretakers place student well-being at the forefront. They are nurturers who hold a deep commitment to their students and their well-being. They often form lasting bonds with their students and do much to build both students' self-esteem and positive regard for school. What limits caretakers is their failure to connect their strong student focus with equally strong academic rigor. They are largely kind and supportive, but they lack a firm handle on academic content and the strategies necessary to equip students with the specific skills necessary to increase student achievement.

SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT

As nurturers, caretakers have students' best interests at heart. As such, they tend to suffer from a skill deficit rather than a will deficit. Addressing the needs of these teachers primarily involves providing structured professional learning around content standards, instructional methodology, and curricular mastery as it relates to student success. These teachers can acquire the skills necessary to move from caretaker to master teacher through professional development and coaching toward deep understanding of content standards, intentional and strategic instructional planning, and knowledge of differentiation strategies. Working in professional learning communities with both technicians and master teachers contributes to structures that provide these nurturers with the content mastery that they require.

Quadrant I: THE STRUGGLER

When a school has struggling teachers, their identity is no secret. They are weak in instructional delivery and student focus. They are teachers whom parents rally to keep their children away from and principals regret having to place students with. These teachers accomplish little academically or socially and emotionally for students and are typically a drain on administrators' time. These teachers' students perform poorly on assessments and tend to show a disproportionate level of behavioral issues, an artifact of their experience in classrooms that provide for neither their academic nor social and emotional needs.

SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT

The potential for struggling teachers to do more damage than good is tremendous. While they can make improvements, their deleterious effect on students and school climate is significant. They can hinder the growth of caretakers and technicians through their negative presence and impact on school climate as well as monopolizing administrators' time. It is tempting for principals to spend the majority of their time with these low-performing teachers, leaving higher-achieving counterparts without sufficient support and feedback to continue in their growth. While the investment of time is often justified by the need to increase these teachers' skills, the disproportionate allocation of time fixing problems caused in these classrooms is a slippery slope for any administrator. They can be the bane of a principal's life as they invest time in support and, often, disciplinary documentation and processes. The wise administrator contains that time wherever possible in order to spend more time supporting and nurturing master teachers and those actively moving toward becoming one. The support offered to struggling teachers must be targeted, explicit, and focused. Professional learning should be coupled with accountability to measure progress.

MEDICAL RESIDENCY MODEL

GOES TO SCHOOL

BY BETH BOATRIGHT AND CHRYSAN GALLUCCI
WITH JUDY SWANSON, MICHELLE VAN LARE, AND IRENE YOON

Imagine you have an illness. In selecting a health care professional, you are faced with two choices: a doctor who is two weeks out of med school, or one who attended med school and then spent two years learning on the job with an experienced, qualified physician. The choice is a no-brainer. You want the doctor who worked side-by-side with skilled physicians and real patients, the one who had the benefit of seeing a wide range of techniques, the one who had the opportunity to make mistakes in a controlled environment. Quite simply, you want the doctor who had numerous occasions to transfer knowledge from formal learning into practice. The long-established residency practice is a major reason why the United States has the strongest medical training system in the world.

Now imagine that you could choose your child's teacher. Would you prefer the teacher whose practices are rarely questioned, or the teacher who has the benefit of an expert's on-the-job guidance and ongoing collegial critique to continuously improve her practice? While the quality of education doesn't have the apparent immediacy of health care decisions, we know that the quality of instruction in the classroom has a significant impact on children's academic curiosity and achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Haycock, 1998).

And, if we are committed to improving the quality of public education, focusing on expert-guided, on-the-job professional development for teachers is a good place to start.

SEEING IS BELIEVING

The Highline School District, located roughly 10 miles south of Seattle, Wash., has begun to implement a residency model for professional learning. Like the medical model, current teachers often traveled from other schools to be "in residency" at a previously selected classroom for six half-day sessions during the 2005-06 school year. Some schools paired up to double their allotted six days into 12. In this arrangement, the host teacher's classroom served as a studio for her and other teachers' learning. What made these learning experiences so beneficial was that they involved real students and real problems of practice. Furthermore, the job-embedded nature of these professional learning experiences increased the likelihood that teachers would be able to transfer what they learned into their own classroom practices (Little, 1993; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999).

But studio residency events are not merely about engaging teachers in critique of their own work. Leaders also play a large role in these half-day learning opportunities. Principals from both residency and studio schools typically observe the professional learning, as do many central office leaders. In 2005-06, Highline's two directors of elementary education came to more than 50 of the elementary studio residency events. Having school and district leaders present keeps them abreast of what teachers are working on and shows support for teachers' professional growth.

External expertise is provided by an instructional consultant — contracted by Highline through the Center for Educational Leadership (CEL) at the University of Washington — who typically facilitates the studio residency work around a previously agreed-upon aspect of instructional practice. CEL consultants are nationally known expert teachers in a particular subject area, with experience facilitating major instructional reforms (such as those in New York City's former Community School District #2 and San Diego). The consultant's job is to expose previously unseen moments where teaching could be better connected to students' learning needs. In many cases, the consultant helps teachers, building leaders, and central office staff identify when a student is ready to take increasing responsibility for his or her own learning.

We (researchers from CEL) observed more than 23 days of studio residencies in Highline between 2005 and 2007. One in particular stands out as an example of expert-guided professional development that actively engaged educators at multiple levels of the district. In spring 2006, principals and teachers from three elementary schools, as well as instructional coaches, Highline central office leaders, and a CEL consultant, were thinking about how classroom book clubs might provoke authentic text-based conversations among 5th graders. For two days, these adults in residency were released from their jobs to focus on a schoolwide problem of practice. Most students had not yet mastered how to read texts and engage in productive, intellectual, text-based conversations with their peers.

DAY ONE

Opportunities for adults to learn at the studio residency sessions are divided across multiple settings and formats. Some hours are spent in the faculty lounge in a large group discussion, some in silent observation of the studio classroom, and some in side conversations with their peers and the consultant during classroom observations and breaks. Day One of this studio residency included observing Laura Hennessey, the studio teacher, as she did a read-aloud of a mystery book with her 5th-grade students. The students sat on the floor as she read the book and periodically paused to ask the group questions about what they heard. Sometimes Hennessey asked the group to turn and talk to a partner about what they were thinking. The main idea of the read-aloud is to guide students through texts that are above their independent reading level and teach them skills they can use to tackle new texts in the future. Hennessey was teaching the characteristics of mysteries as a genre of literature.

Lyn Reggett, the CEL consultant, sat next to Hennessey as she taught the read-aloud. Meanwhile, the adults in residency observed closely. During moments when students were busy conversing in pairs, Reggett and Hennessey conferred about how much longer to let them talk before moving into a larger circle for a whole-group discussion. The whole-

Would you prefer the teacher whose practices are rarely questioned?

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group discussion was intended to gradually release students from the guidance of the teacher and build their independence as thinkers. And yet, the whole-group discussion — as Hennessey and others expected — was somewhat stilted. Students were still new to the idea of building upon each others' ideas. After class, the adults debriefed what they saw, acknowledging a real assessment challenge for teachers. One teacher pinpointed the problem: "How do you know what your students are capable of if they don't talk in large groups?"

Reggett responded, "Get them in smaller groups, get alongside them, and *listen in* [her emphasis]. There are multiple ways of judging what kids know and can do. In different situations, kids show different aspects of what they know. Small groups are one way to assess kids. The word 'assessment' actually means to sit alongside. It's the root word. As I sit alongside kids, I can assess what they know and can do."

Highline School District
Burien, Wash.

Number of schools: 39
Enrollment: 17,266
Staff: 2,529
Racial/ethnic mix:
- **White:** 35.2%
- **Black:** 14.5%
- **Hispanic:** 27.0%
- **Asian/Pacific Islander:** 21.2%
- **Native American:** 2.0%

Free/reduced lunch: 56.7%
Special education: 12.6%
Limited English proficient: 18.6%
Languages spoken: 70
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Whatever transpired in Hennessey's classroom would be the basis for future discussions.

The group decided that Day Two would be a good opportunity to observe the same students in the early stages of book clubs. To prepare for Day Two, they agreed to read specifically about building productive book clubs in Lucy Calkins' *The Art of Teaching Reading.*

DAY TWO

Day Two began with an hour-long discussion among the adults (roughly 10 of them) about what authentic, text-based conversations might look like at the 5th-grade level. For instance, many teachers wondered how to choose a reading book for students that is just right — not too difficult and not too easy. Some teachers tossed around ideas that they had tried, such as asking students to list 10 favorite books and five people in the class with whom they can have academic conversations. Meanwhile, the studio teacher, Hennessey, excused herself to begin her lesson with the students. The large group entered her classroom strategically, at the moment when Hennessey's students were beginning to meet in their four-person book clubs. There was an air of excitement among the adults because they were "getting to see it in practice from the very beginning," explained one principal. Whatever transpired in Hennessey's classroom would be the basis for future discussions. No one expected perfection. The CEL consultant, Reggett, reiterated that they were "just collecting data" on the students' ability to hold text-based discussions.

As students settled into their book clubs, the observers noted that some conversations appeared to be simply a mix of unrelated statements. One student would put an idea on the table, but get no response. Another student in the same book club would put forth a different idea, without building upon the first student's idea. Groups were literally not on the same page. Students seemed not to know how to get their peers to address their ideas — or they were unaware that they were supposed to do so. Hennessey approached Reggett to chat briefly about this problem. Reggett agreed that this problem was occurring in multiple book clubs and that "it's about being accountable to your book group." Hennessey stopped the class to say to her students, "What I'm noticing as I walk around to your groups is that some people have some great ideas and great examples and they're turning to it in their books, but the rest of the group isn't. So if you have a great example or a clue or something you want to talk about, you need to find it, and you need to have your whole group find it. Tell them the page, tell them the paragraph, so that everyone knows what you're talking about."

Hennessey's advice seemed to work for some groups, not for others. After class, the adults convened in the conference room to debrief what they saw. People agreed that the students were trying to refer to examples in text to support their ideas, but often could not sustain a discussion because not all students had their texts out and open. Reggett related the adults' ideas to a greater issue of accountability: "There's this accountability piece. Are we holding onto that? So if you're in a community, a partnership, a book group, part of your responsibility is to keep track of your meaning-making, to make sure that everyone knows what part of the book you're talking about. Everyone else knows it's their responsibility to be with that person. So that's accountability. When we say

'accountable talk,' we are referring to accountability to the community, accountability to the knowledge and the content, and accountability to rigorous thinking."

In this example, the studio residency model provided a framework for transferring knowledge from formal learning into practice. Hennessey had the opportunity to question herself in a controlled environment; she had the benefit of addressing real problems of practice; and she was able to do all of this with colleagues so that the conversations could continue after the consultant left.

One principal said to Reggett, "I've been paying attention to the work you did on questioning … with letting kids know there isn't a 'right' answer. I've been watching how you talk to them." "In book groups," another teacher said, "the goals really come from kids. Their needs really drive the instruction. What I really want is for them to get meaning from their reading. If they don't get what I want [them to understand], then I need to change — not them."

These professional learning opportunities prompted even veteran teachers to rethink their practice.

INITIAL OUTCOMES

Seeing such a visible influence of professional development on practice is rare, and these initial outcomes from the studio residency model demonstrate the strength of job-embedded coaching. In situations where educational leaders reserved time and funds for a literacy expert to guide classroom-embedded professional learning opportunities — and also followed up with instructional coaching support between the studio residency events — we observed teachers in Highline starting to try on new practices. And, although the focus of our study was on teacher learning and not on the model's impact on student achievement, it is clear that positive trends are emerging in the development of teachers' content knowledge and their awareness of students' learning needs.

When skillfully applied in teachers' work contexts, the expertise of nationally known literacy consultants impressed school and district leaders. An assistant superintendent noted that she was gaining "a deeper knowledge of reading instruction itself." Another central office leader said that the studio residencies reinforced her belief that "you can't lead from afar."

These professional learning opportunities prompted even veteran teachers to rethink their practice. One explained that she had been "lulled into a false sense of progress" with a seemingly high-performing reader. After participating as a studio teacher, she learned how to better identify and address students' strengths and challenges in reading. She commented, "It's exciting that — like any profession, be it a doctor or somebody in technology — [our teaching is] getting better. And I think that is a new mind-set for a lot of teachers. They always think of [professional development] in terms of, 'Here comes another program.' But I think the whole approach to [studio residencies] is not a program. It's, 'How can we refine our craft? How can we get better and add to our knowledge base and be willing to take some risks?' "

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This article stems from our research on the CEL-district partnerships in Highline, Wash., Marysville, Wash., and Norwalk-La Mirada, Calif.

In fall 2004, we initiated a qualitative research study into what, and how, a third-party support provider — the Center for Educational Leadership (CEL) at the University of Washington — engages districts in a collaborative teaching and learning partnership about instructional improvement. Using a three-year case study design, we collected and analyzed more than 175 interviews and many more informal conversations, field notes from observations of more than 135 district and school events, as well as artifacts from district, school, and classroom sources.

For more information about our research, visit http://depts.washington.edu/uwcel/resources/research.html.

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SEE ME, HEAR ME, COACH ME

Virtual bug-in-ear technology brings immediacy to professional development

BY MARCIA L. ROCK, MADELEINE GREGG, PAMELA W. HOWARD, DONNA M. PLOESSL, SHARRON MAUGHN, ROBERT A. GABLE, & NAOMI P. ZIGMOND

It is late in the afternoon. Kendra Applebee's 2nd graders are working on the carpet. Some are talking, others are wiggling, and a few are poking at peers while Applebee reads aloud from the story "Gregory's Shadow." She recently started teaching a science unit on shadows. Applebee thought the children would be excited about the topic, and she is pleased that she has integrated literature into the unit. But her children do not seem very interested. Applebee is feeling puzzled and slightly frustrated with the lesson that has been under way for a few minutes as the Skype call signal rings on her computer. She realizes it's 2 p.m. Applebee

smiles as the children look eagerly at the computer that sits atop her desk. They all know what time it is. Applebee reaches in her pocket, pulls out her Bluetooth earpiece, and slides it over her ear on her way to the computer. She moves the cursor to the green button, accepting the interactive video conference call, and the weekly virtual coaching session begins.

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Coach: "Hello, Mrs. Applebee. How are you today?"

Applebee: "I'm good. How are you? The children are excited to see you today."

Children: *(waving at the web cam and chanting in unison)* "Good afternoon, Dr. Rock."

Coach: "I am well, thanks. Please say hello to the children for me and let them know I appreciate their warm welcome. I see them waving. And I can hear you and see you. Please begin when you are ready."

Applebee minimizes the coach's image on the computer screen, so the children are not distracted, and resumes the lesson.

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ON-THE-SPOT COACHING

While the idea of educational coaching is not new, the way teachers-in-training across six west Alabama counties are receiving job-embedded support is far from routine. In fact, these teachers are going boldly into a virtual frontier. Educational consultants 764 miles away are pioneering the use of the same kind of virtual coaching for professional development. From their offices at the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) in Harrisburg, Pa., consultants use online and mobile technology to coach special education teachers and paraeducators in four outlying public school districts.

In the most effective coaching and supervision paradigms, feedback to teachers is immediate (Scheeler, McAfee, & Ruhl, 2004). Nevertheless, many coaches don't achieve immediacy in the traditional plan-observe-conference cycle so many use. Feedback often occurs long after the teaching episode and out of the teaching context. Bug-in-ear technology can change that (Rock et al., in press). Bug-in-ear technology is a proven method for improving the professional practice of frontline practitioners. Consisting mainly of a portable two-way radio with earpiece and microphone, bug-in-ear devices allow coaches or supervisors to give teachers immediate feedback while they are delivering instruction in their classrooms.

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Applebee: "When I call your name, it is your turn to read aloud. Please follow along so you know where we are in the book when I call on you."

Coach: *(corrective feedback)* "Kendra, you're using round-robin reading, a low-access instructional strategy — only one student can respond at a time. To give all students high opportunities to respond correctly, try a high-access read-aloud strategy like choral reading, partner reading, or cloze-reading with choral response. Please give one of those a try now."

Applebee: "Let's try reading the next page aloud together."

Coach: *(encouraging feedback)* "That's it! Choral reading is a good choice. Now all the students are actively engaged in the read-aloud."

Students finish reading aloud chorally from the story.

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Studies validating bug-in-ear technology 's effectiveness have appeared in education and related fields for more than five decades (Bowles & Nelson, 1976; Gallant & Thyer, 1989; Korner & Brown, 1952). But because traditional devices rely on FM radio frequency technology, their transmitting capabilities are limited to a range of 150 to 300 feet and the coach or supervisor has to be on-site to use the device. Recent advances in Internet and mobile technology, however, have revolutionized the bug-in-ear device so that virtual coaching can happen at a distance. The breakthrough came with the introduction

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Advanced online bug-in-ear virtual coaching system

COMPONENTS	COST
BASIC COMPONENTS	
Plantronics P1-Voyager 510 Bluetooth Headset	$41.36
IOGear Enhanced Date Rate Bluetooth Wireless USB Adapter GBU221	$34.00
Creative WebCam Live! Ultra-Web Camera	$61.00
Skype	Free
SUBTOTAL	$136.36
ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS	
Pamela Call Recording (Optional for bug-in-ear video recording)	$36.95
Maxtor One Touch III USB 2.0 External Hard Drive (Optional for archiving video recorded sessions)	$159.99
TOTAL	$333.30

Source: Rock et al., in press (Information is proprietary; patent pending)

of Bluetooth technology. A Bluetooth earpiece allows the teacher to receive coaching while delivering classroom instruction and without interrupting the lesson. For the first time, two professional development tools — coaching and bug-in-ear technology — can be used together and effectively to overcome barriers of time and distance.

THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF VIRTUAL BUG-IN-EAR COACHING

More information

The online version of this article includes a table summarizing professional development implications for this approach. See www.nsdc.org/news/jsd/.

While virtual bug-in-ear coaching may seem futuristic, it is feasible today using most school districts' existing technology resources and most teachers' existing level of technology know-how. That said, practical information can help sustain initial enthusiasm. Before launching into virtual coaching, mentors and teachers need to plan how and when they will make contact as well as how, when, and what type of feedback will be offered.

Making contact

To begin, virtual coaches and teachers need to assemble the tools needed to conduct interactive video conferencing. See the components and estimated cost of our advanced online bug-in-ear technology in the table above. After the district or school obtains the equipment, it takes just a couple of hours to install the software and equipment on a desktop computer. After a few tests, the first virtual coaching session can begin.

Once the teacher and the coach have agreed on the time and date, each allots a minimum of 30 minutes for the interactive session. At the appointed time, the virtual coach places the interactive videoconference call to the teacher in the classroom. Skype's instant messaging feature is especially useful for remedying almost any technological problem. If the problem cannot be resolved in a few minutes, the session is rescheduled to minimize disruptions in the instructional day. When a call drops during a session, the coach calls the teacher back and the connection is re-established almost seamlessly.

Providing feedback

While technology allows virtual coaching to take place from a distance, it is the feedback the mentor provides that supports the teacher in a distant classroom. Because virtual coaching relies primarily on auditory feedback, it is essential that a coach consider the quality and quantity of his or her remarks before sharing them with the mentee. As with on-site coaching, virtual feedback should be offered in a warm and supportive tone. However, unlike on-site coaching, the coach can give feedback in real-time while the teacher is talking or delivering instruction but without interfering in the lesson. The coach can talk to the teacher when there is silence in the classroom (i.e. the students are engaged in independent or cooperative learning activities), as well as before or after the lesson. The type of coaching feedback can include encouragement or timely questions as well as instructional and corrective remarks.

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Applebee: "Now it's time to make predictions about shadows. What do you think will happen when I hold this piece of paper up in front of the flashlight? Will we see a shadow?"

Coach: *(instructive feedback)* "Do you notice how only a few students are raising their hands to answer the prediction question? Now would be a good time to stimulate their prior knowledge and to use some high-access strategies. Instruct the students to think about what they have been learning about shadows and the story

you just read together. Then instruct them to share their prediction with a partner."

Applebee: "To help you make a prediction, think about what we have been learning about shadows and the story we just read together — 'Gregory's Shadow.' Then, turn to your partner and share your prediction. Remember to be respectful. You need to use whisper voices."

Coach: *(encouraging feedback)* "Wonderful! See how all your students are now actively engaged in the lesson? They are eagerly talking with their partner about shadows and what they think will happen when you shine the light over part of the paper."

Applebee: "Let's listen respectfully while two or three partners share their predictions."

Coach: *(instructive feedback)* "Remind the other students to agree or disagree with the predictions by putting their thumbs up or down. And record their predictions on the whiteboard to begin modeling the scientific procedure."

Applebee: "Thank you for sharing. Please put your thumbs up if you agree with their prediction or your thumbs down if you disagree. Great job using your thumbs to agree or disagree. Let me see thumbs up or down again so we can count together and record our responses on the board. That's what smart scientists do!"

Coach: "Terrific! Now, while you are recording, ask them a higher-order question. Why did you make that prediction or why do you agree or disagree? Doing so will help you to check their understanding."

Applebee: "Keep your thumbs in the air while I record and turn and tell your partner why you agreed or disagreed."

Coach: *(encouraging and questioning feedback)* "Wonderful! They are really with you now, but listen carefully. Some of the students are using faulty reasoning to support their answers. Do you see now why it is important to ask those higher-order questions and to give as many students as possible an opportunity to respond using high-access instructional strategies?"

Applebee: "Yes, I sure do."

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LESSONS LEARNED

Since spring 2007, we have conducted more than 350 virtual coaching sessions using virtual bug-in-ear technology with frontline practitioners enrolled in Project TEEACH, a federally funded training program designed to transform practicing general education teachers into advocates, change agents, and highly qualified special educators. Our Pennsylvania

counterparts at PaTTAN launched their use of virtual coaching more recently, in February 2008. The lessons learned from these two ongoing projects have been as varied as they have been instructive.

Technology-related lessons

The good news is that the advanced online bug-in-ear technology has proven to be dependable, achieving an 84% or better reliability rating — the systems work when they are turned on — in fall 2007. Nevertheless, while the technology is sound, there are occasional minor glitches.

The most frequent stumbling blocks have included problems with firewalls, bandwidth limitations, audio difficulties, dropped calls, video and audio recording issues, and lack of on-site technical support. Others using interactive videoconferencing have reported similar problems (Bower, 2001; Levy, 2005). Basic technology support and a can-do attitude appear to be enough to overcome these occasional glitches.

People-specific lessons

For many teachers, the thought of having a virtual visitor not only looking over your shoulder but also whispering in your ear while you are teaching is disquieting. Indeed, previous researchers (Gallant & Thyer, 1989; Gersten, Morvant, & Brengelman, 1995) have established that new and experienced teachers frequently report heightened levels of anxiety when they are being coached. The mere presence of "another" (i.e. observer, coach, supervisor, administrator, or colleague) in a classroom implies that the teacher is doing something wrong (Gersten et al., 1995). To help the teachers feel warm support instead of harsh scrutiny, we have used a scaffolded approach that allows the practicing teachers to be immersed gradually in more and more intensive virtual coaching experiences. We also have sought to alleviate the teachers' anxiety by investing time and energy in developing relationships. As in any coaching situation, the bond between the professionals should be predicated on trust and respect (Knight, 2007; Norton, 2007).

IMPACT OF VIRTUAL COACHING ON TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

While the Pennsylvania project has just begun, we have analyzed and reported data on 15 practicing teachers who participated in the first Project TEEACH-related bug-in-ear study (Rock et al., in press). Quantitative and qualitative results indicated that the advanced online bug-in-ear technology was a practical and efficient way to provide immedi-

ate job-embedded feedback, resulting in four noteworthy outcomes. First, the climate in the teachers' classrooms improved significantly. During instructional interactions, the teachers used more specific, descriptive praise and fewer reprimands contributing to a nurturing, student-centered learning environment. Second, the teachers' use of research-based practices increased significantly. Third, students' on-task behavior improved from 73.8% to 92.7%. Fourth, the teachers viewed the advanced online bug-in-ear technology as a powerful tool for improving the teaching and learning process.

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The lesson continues with Applebee varying the light source and object position under which she performs the flashlight activity. Students go on making predictions, while Applebee records their observations on the board. The coach intermittently provides encouraging feedback each time Applebee uses a high-access instructional strategy and poses a higher-order question to the students, which she does without further instructive or corrective prompting for the remainder of the lesson.

Applebee: "Well, kids, that's all we have time for today in science. It's time to get your backpacks and line up for dismissal."

Coach: *(instructive and corrective feedback)* "Kendra, remember: It's important to review the lesson. Try singing the 'Shadow' song you taught the children last week while they gather their belongings. Then when they are in line, review the main points of today's lesson about shadows. Challenge them to look for their shadow as they walk to the bus."

Applebee: "Yes, I know I need to work on that. I will."

Applebee transitions the students, putting into practice the coach's suggestions, while the coach continues to offer brief encouraging remarks. As the dismissal bells sound, the coach offers summary feedback.

Coach: *(instructive, encouraging, and questioning feedback)* "Nice job, Kendra, incorporating the feedback I gave you today into the lesson. I look forward to seeing you use more of those strategies next week when I visit virtually. Also, I think you did well today creating a positive classroom climate, using descriptive commenting, incorporating literature in the science unit, and engaging the students in an authentic science activity. What would you like to continue working on next week?

Applebee: "I know I need to work on content, ask higher-order questions, and use more high-access strategies."

Coach: "I think so, too. Please thank the children for me; I'll see you all again soon."

Applebee: "Thank you very much."

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CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The teachers, consultants, and administrators involved in the Pennsylvania and Alabama virtual coaching projects are on the cutting edge in the use of technology in schools. In seeking innovative ways to make classrooms places in which all students succeed, these pioneers are entering the virtual world of technology in search of strategies that will improve both teaching and learning processes. The classroom-based research conducted so far shows that their efforts are paying off, not only for the teachers, but also for their students.

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A WORK *in* PROGRESS

Formative assessments shape teaching and provide mutual professional development

BY JULIA STEINY

The 6th-grade language arts teachers at Twin Groves Middle School, in Illinois' Kildeer District 96, chitchatted as they trickled in to what they assumed would be an ordinary session of common planning time. They usually gather in Lauren Loessl's classroom, with walls nearly hidden behind student work, informational posters, and a wealth of pictures of dogs, both Loessl's own and others. The teachers comfortably took their seats to examine the results of a pretest they'd given to their 200 students.

To their surprise, the test results were loud and clear: The upcoming unit of study they'd carefully crafted would be completely repetitive for most of the students. Everyone had to take a deep breath. The good news was that they would avoid wasting everyone's precious time and patience. But the tough news was that they

Loessl

were back to square one in terms of unit planning and curriculum building. Thankfully, they could trust the group's collective wisdom to help each other tackle this challenge. After revising their overall plan, they began to shore up each others' lesson plans with activities, assignments, and methods they'd learned on their own over the years.

Sparking this flame of mutual professional development was a formative assessment. "Formatives," as the practitioners call them, are a technique usually adopted as a safety net for struggling students. But as districts are finding out, they are also very effective at honing teacher practice.

Everyone is all too familiar with summative assessments — the grades on student work, marks on report cards, and public reports of state and district tests. These tests summarize the extent to which students — and schools — have met expectations. They're the final word.

Kildeer Superintendent Tom Many describes the perception of summative assessments as, "Write the grade in the book, shut the book, and move on — we're done. But the problem is that they don't tell teachers much about what is happening during instruction."

Formative assessments are a different animal, and not meant for public viewing. They're written and given by a group of teachers — the 5th-grade team, or 7th-grade social studies teachers. The tests assess with some precision where the kids' learning and skills are in relation to a current or upcoming unit or topic. What, if anything, do the kids know about the subject before it is taught? After teaching a unit for four weeks, how much material stuck with the kids? Why did some kids get it, and some didn't? There could be lots of reasons for the difference between the students' retention of the information, but until teachers know what the kids know, student by student, they can't identify the root of any problems.

Twin Groves Middle School
Buffalo Grove, Ill.

Grades: 6-8
Enrollment: 565
Staff: 49 certified, 24 educational support staff
Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	82.1%
Black:	1.2%
Hispanic:	1.9%
Asian/Pacific Islander:	14.7%
Native American:	0%
Other:	0%

Limited English proficient: 1.1%
Languages spoken: 29
Free/reduced lunch: 1.8%
Special education: 14%
Contact: Marie Schalke, principal
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A passionate advocate of formative assessment, Many says, "We used to say that kids fell through the cracks. The truth is we knew little about student learning until the end of a unit. Formative assessments help teachers make adjustments during instruction so kids have a better chance to learn what they need to learn. This closes the cracks."

According to Kildeer's grade-level reading standards, it was time for Loessl and the 6th-grade team to teach the elements of figurative language and sound devices — simile, metaphor, alliteration, personification, and onomatopoeia. After working with formatives for some time, this team has gotten into the habit of simultaneously mapping out the lessons themselves while drafting the assessment that will act as a dipstick look into the kids' knowledge tanks. Typically, a formative asks seven to 10 questions, depending on the number of standards being assessed. Loessl says, "But in this case, to really understand what the kids know about five distinct conventions of language, a single question could mask information." A 6th-grader might understand the concept of a simile, but be baffled by "My love is like a red, red rose." So the teachers asked four to seven questions for each figure of speech. The result was a 40-question pretest that they gave before teaching the unit.

Loessl says, "Preassessment is great because we sit down together and ask ourselves what we're going to do. We knew the students were ready to focus on interpreting (the figures of speech) instead of merely identifying them. We knew they'd had some instruction before, and we didn't want to be repetitive."

Formative tests assess with some precision where the kids' learning and skills are in relation to a current or upcoming unit or topic.

Little did they dream just how repetitive they were about to be. The team had planned to spend four weeks helping as many children as possible to achieve at least an 80% on the posttest. Only 57 students scored below 80% on the pretest.

TIME TO REGROUP

Even if the five teachers had exactly the same training — they did not — they would still have collected five different sets of interests, favorite methods, activities, and tricks during preservice or while teaching. So, pulling from their collective bag of tricks, the teachers devised entirely new units of study, with new assignments, to challenge students to use these literary devices in writing tasks.

Loessl says of her colleagues, "We pool our resources. We share thoughts

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about activities or how to use the aide in the classroom. We are always learning from each other, every day, and the kids get the best of all our thinking — not the first practice we come up with, but the best."

Jeanne Spiller, Kildeer staff development coordinator, says, "We're trying to quit teaching towards the middle, and design instruction to reach all the cohorts."

But to do that, teachers have to be learning right along with the kids. Spiller remarks, "At first teachers didn't understand the purpose of being on collaborative teams, but the data is showing them why they need to work together. Together, the teams are having a really positive impact on student learning."

Paul Louis, the district's curriculum director, notes that when a teacher gets especially great results, other teachers start to ask, "How did you do that? How did you demonstrate? How did you have them practice?" He says that some teachers resist formatives until suddenly they say, "Hey, wait! We're making big improvements. Teams (of like-subject teachers) tell me that they're getting clearer and clearer about the expectations for each kid. This is deep, job-embedded professional development. We've really gotten away from going to workshops as our primary staff development opportunities."

Many believes that "by talking about the assessment results, teachers: 1) sharpen their pedagogical skills, 2) deepen their content knowledge, and 3) maximize the impact of their instruction, all of which are great for teachers."

Barrington Middle School
Barrington, R.I.

Grades: 6-8
Enrollment: 862
Staff: 76
Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	96%
Black:	1%
Hispanic:	1%
Asian/Pacific Islander:	2%
Native American:	0%
Other:	0%

Limited English proficient: 0%
Languages spoken: English
Free/reduced lunch: 4%
Special education: 14%
Contact: Betty Calise, curriculum director
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THE COURAGE TO TAKE AND USE FEEDBACK

At Barrington Middle School in

Rhode Island, three 7th-grade math teachers take refuge from the school's din in a conference room. These teachers are not looking at a pretest like the Twin Groves group, but a formative posttest, one that came after four weeks of instruction. Pre- and post-formatives are often quite similar, since the point is to be assured that students learned a specific set of skills and content. Posttests raise a much more diverse array of questions and challenges than pretests. If the data reveal that the kids are having problems with the material, do the problems lie with the learner, the teacher, the design of the instruction, or the test itself? Teachers must solve these mysteries together.

Rob Lloyd, Megan Medeiros, and Julie Abbruzzi unfurl their spreadsheets with each of their students' scores. As math teachers, they naturally slice, dice, and graph data on their own. They're excited to see each other's results.

As they pore through the data, they see first that every child in the teachers' three classes got question 6 correct, so they're not sure it's telling them anything useful. Asking good questions is key to effective instruction, so they make a note to work on this question for next year's formative on the same material.

Conversely, question 5 buffaloed a lot of kids. What could have gone wrong? Were the students confused by the vocabulary used in the question? Maybe. They toss out possibilities for rewording the problem. They decide to go back to their classrooms and each give the kids a few similar problems. Perhaps students really do understand the basic concept, and the question itself was somehow flawed. If not, reteaching is in order, and they'll have to figure out what went wrong in the first place in order to develop the reteaching.

The Barrington teachers' data reveal that six students did not get 80% or better, the threshold signaling they should get extra help. It's only October. As a class keeps moving ahead, students who didn't get the basic concepts could easily fall further and further behind. By May, those students could be lost. But both Barrington and Kildeer have special intervention periods built into their schedules where struggling students can go on an as-needed basis. There, they get targeted help in the skills the formatives showed were lacking. No struggling child is left behind in some remedial purgatory, nor allowed just to flounder alongside his peers.

As Medeiros says, "The kids trust

that we're keeping them on a successful path."

Betty Calise, Barrington's curriculum director, puts it this way: "In the past, we'd wait for the end of the quarter, do a summative, and realize it didn't work. Now we're trying to nip problems quickly and figure out how to get the kids the extra help they need. The number of course failures at the middle school has dropped dramatically."

These assessments are also road maps for teachers. The teachers have quick feedback in the event the material is not getting across. Medeiros says, "For example, last year the (formative) tests showed that I'd run into a vocabulary problem. I thought I'd taught it well, and I hadn't. I needed to look at how I could do things differently."

Under tremendous pressure to produce summative results, teachers need to understand how mistakes happen so they can avoid repeating them. Many says that formatives "can expose the strengths and weaknesses of a teacher's practice. But it informs them so they can redesign quickly and become more effective quickly. Yes, teachers sometimes bristle at the feedback. But in the end, it's about the outcome and the quality of the work."

Under tremendous pressure to produce summative results, teachers need to understand how mistakes happen so they can avoid repeating them.

Calise says, "You always need to know what you don't know. Unless you do, you can't learn. The teachers now learn so much from each other. This is perfect embedded professional development."

Of Rhode Island's 314 schools, 43 were deemed commended, which means they have shown consistent improvement over time or achieved at an exceptionally high level. All six of Barrington's schools were among those 43. Officials immediately pointed to their formatives when asked how they were raising achievement across the district.

FORMATIVES MEET CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES

Connie Kamm, a professional development associate for the Leadership and Learning Center in Englewood, Colo. is a formative-assessment evangelist.

Her colleague is Larry Ainsworth, who, with Donald Viegut, wrote *Common Formative Assessments* (Corwin Press, 2006), a seminal text on the subject.

Kamm notes with a sigh, "Many educators are caught in the cycle of teach, teach, test, move on. Formative assessment embraces the cycle of teach, assess, reflect, reteach. This methodology is not new. Researchers have known that students taught using the formative assessment cycle were outscoring traditionally taught students by at least 15%."

But the public, especially after No Child Left Behind, is wedded to summative assessments.

For background on the subject, Kamm recommended the article "Inside the Black Box," written in 1998 for *Phi Delta Kappan* by British researchers Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam. By "black box," they mean any school's classroom, whose inner workings are opaque to the general public, except for the summative assessments that provide virtually the only image of education's efforts. In this age of superheated demands for accountability, the summatives are important because they provide the public with some sense of the results of their investment.

But Black and Wiliam believe that rather than contributing to effective teaching, summatives "encourage rote and superficial learning. ... The questions and other methods teachers use are not shared with other teachers in the same school and are not critically reviewed in relation to what they actually assess."

As a result, the authors note, "The giving of marks and the grading function are overemphasized, while the giving of useful advice and the learning function are underemphasized."

By contrast, the much more useful formatives "require careful scrutiny of all the main components of a teaching plan. Indeed, it is clear that instruction and formative assessment are indivisible."

Kamm says, "All assessments don't have to be for grades. With these new methodologies (formatives), teachers get a chance to provide students with multiple opportunities to successfully master specific concepts and skills. Teachers get feedback from one another about the effectiveness of their instructional strategies. So we're turning classrooms into laboratories where teachers study student learning as well as their own teaching methodologies. Teachers are becoming scholars."

In the Internet age, the latest research is at teachers' fingertips. "Teachers have started to look at students with a researcher's eye, constantly asking themselves lots of questions about student learning and getting

into research for the answers," says Kamm.

And since they now know what they don't know, teacher teams turn to their district to request specific outside professional development when they've hit a brick wall and know what they need.

As a consultant, Kamm says that often staff will resist implementing the use of formatives when they are unfamiliar with their benefits and processes. Professional learning is critical. Principals and districts must be committed to giving teachers the time and support they need to understand, create, and analyze formative assessments.

But once the issue of adequate time has been resolved, resistance melts quickly because teachers enjoy reaping the full fruits of their labor.

Tom Many concludes, "For the last 40 years, something like 4,000 studies have demonstrated that when done well, formative assessments may be the most powerful tool we have for leveraging higher levels of student learning. You're not guessing. You teach from knowledge instead of intuition. Formative assessments inform teacher practice. The more informed teachers are, the better their lesson plans. The better the lessons, the better students learn. They're a logical link that develops good information that cascades though the whole teaching and learning process."

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COLLABORATION TAKES CENTER STAGE

Interactive teaching through a schoolwide focus on the performing arts leads to dramatic improvements in learning

BY JEFF WILLIAMSON AND DIANE ZIMMERMAN

Consider these learner-centric outcomes that great teachers address before, during, and after a lesson. While engaged in teaching students, the teacher not only learns a curriculum more completely, he or she monitors student progress, adapts the lesson to student needs, pays attention to the struggling student, analyzes the effectiveness of the learning situation, decides which tools and resources are needed to further learning, designs situations for students to apply new learning, examines student learning modes in use, assesses mastery of standards, and monitors personal practice.

Teaching is so much more about learning than it is about teaching.

In the Old Adobe Union School District in Petaluma, Calif., our goal is to assure that all teachers make the fundamental shift from teacher-centric to learner-centric thinking. For us, this is what distinguishes great teachers from good teachers. We believe this level of expertise takes years to develop and that schools play an important role in assuring that all teachers become expert and that all teachers learn to bring their students to a higher level of understanding.

THE SCHOOL JOURNEY

Before Principal Jeff Williamson's arrival at Old Adobe Elementary School, the teachers had committed to integrating the visual and performing arts into their curriculum and had purchased a Yamaha music lab. In his first year as principal, Williamson focused his energy on getting the lab running and on helping teachers feel comfortable with this complex technology. Williamson knew that this emphasis on things and activities was not going to get the school where he wanted it to be. He was anxious to start working with teachers in ways that asked them to examine their beliefs about learning. He wanted to interact with teachers to discover areas for growth, analyze limiting conditions, examine resources available for improvement, form and implement a plan for addressing these needs, and monitor this process.

At the same time, the Old Adobe Union School District Board of Trustees asked each school in the district to develop a guiding question that would serve as a focal point for school improvement efforts. Williamson and his staff framed a guiding question that would shift their focus from things and activities to student learning and teacher beliefs that guide their actions. The staff asked, "How can we offer a well-rounded curriculum integrating the visual and performing arts in every classroom, and verify that this benefits students?" Overnight, the emphasis shifted from conducting activities in a technology lab to engaging in deep discussions about performing arts processes and how they could be used to engage the hearts and minds of children. Two years later, we know this singular focus on the arts pushed the teachers and principal to think more deeply about the cognitive demands and complexity of teaching and learning. We call this level of expertise panoramic outcomes, where educators maintain a constant focus on sophisticated outcomes for the learner and the collaborative expertise and shared vision needed to get there.

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THE POWER OF A CATALYST

Once the school framed its focus for improvement, Williamson began searching for the right instructor to work side-by-side with teachers. "What I know about teachers is that if they see the value of a new idea in terms of its success in improving student learning, teachers will be more likely to embrace new ideas and put them into practice," Williamson says. His eureka moment came when he saw teacher Kristina Wenz organize the school talent show. As a drama teacher, she knew how to make each moment count by integrating the arts processes to create meaningful learning activities. She could elicit fabulous responses from kids, adapting as she taught to increase engagement, challenge, and excitement. She never left an interaction with students without building in success.

Everyone at Old Adobe School has become engaged in learning conversations, from the kindergartners, to staff, to parents.

Williamson invited Wenz to join him in collaborative planning with his teachers. The format would be simple. Each grade level would identify the content areas that would focus their work with Wenz to draw upon her vast knowledge of the performing arts and classroom instruction. Wenz served as a catalytic change agent. She facilitated the infusion of the arts into the curriculum and guided the teachers in making this enhanced educational experience their own. For the teachers, this often meant a change in instructional practices. Williamson notes, "I believe the catalytic processes involve reflecting with colleagues, side-by-side teaching, and finally the commitment — articulating student and teacher learning." (See "Catalytic lesson plan sequence" above.)

As the first teacher to engage in this collaborative process, Kathy Buckley identified 4th-grade social studies lessons that focused on the geography of California. Wenz helped Buckley plan lessons in which the students would sculpt a giant floor map of California, and then using improvisational techniques, the students would body-sculpt the flora and fauna for each region. Not only did the kids have fun, the teacher found that after the activity, the students conversed knowledgeably about the various regions of California. The experience had exceeded everyone's expectations and set a standard for future job-embedded learning experiences. Throughout the rest of the year, each grade-level group had a chance to collaborate in this type of team.

From the beginning, it was clear that the framework of the performing arts paired with teacher experts was increasing the cognitive complexity of teacher planning and reflection. We had crossed a threshold. The teachers started to collaborate on their own, and there has been no stopping them. In the words of Malcolm Gladwell (2000), we had reached a tipping point: the moment when teachers took charge of their own learning.

CATALYTIC LESSON PLAN SEQUENCE

Team members include the specialist, Kristina Wenz, and the principal and grade-level team.

1. Grade-level team identifies content/unit focus.
2. Planning meeting: Team collaborates to plan lessons for the next week.
3. For one week, Wenz, as process expert, spends two hours a day in each classroom conducting side-by-side teaching.
4. Team reflection meeting: Review lessons, document new learning, make commitments, and identify other supporting actions.

Professional collaboration has woven its way into our school's culture. Teachers work together in planning lessons, implementing instruction, reflecting on the results, and improving instruction, working in an ongoing cycle. The teachers have moved beyond fear and worries about how they are perceived as they share ideas and ask questions. Focused professional development and collaboration are built into teachers' workday, and teachers frequently engage in reflective conversations on improving practice. Everyone at Old Adobe School has become engaged in learning conversations, from the kindergartners, to staff, to parents. The blurring of the line between teachers and learners has created a school where all are leaders in their learning and that of others.

COGNITIVE COMPLEXITY

The primary mission of any school is to create engaged, caring, and responsible citizens. This requires that we capture the hearts and minds of our children while raising the cognitive complexity of learning in ways that assure learner success. Williamson believes that in order to make learning relevant to all learners, teachers must interact with other teachers and with students as they craft lessons. He explains that in effective learning communities, the line between teacher and learner moves, creating new plateaus for understanding. He also asserts that teachers need to be confident and clear about the goals of their work, based on identifying student needs, while at the same time constantly questioning what they do to find ways to move students toward new plateaus of learning. When teachers reflect on practice at this level, they become the

STAGES OF LEARNING BASED ON MATURING OUTCOMES

ACTIVITY

The entry point for inexperienced teachers.

- What do I want to accomplish in this lesson?
- What will I do to make it happen?
- What will my students be doing if they are accomplishing it?

CONTENT

When paired with activity, content becomes gateway outcome.

- What concepts and skills do students need in place to access deeper learning and demonstrate their learning?
- What situations will we create to foster learning and its application?
- How will students demonstrate content mastery?
- How will teachers give feedback?

PROCESSES

Tipping point for teachers in the journey from good to great.

- What processes are best for this learning?
- What processes are necessary for each learner?
- How is the learner engaged in these processes?
- How does the learner monitor and express progress throughout these processes?
- How will those involved evaluate processes used?
- How does my school support our collective work in this area?

DISPOSITIONS

Gaining schoolwide consensus is the tipping point for school leadership.

- What habits or dispositions of mind will learners use and develop as they become involved in reflective learning?
- How will available resources aid them in developing more powerful habits of mind?
- How will they uncover or express new understandings?
- How will the learner identify next steps and a means to reach them?

STATES OF MIND

Emergence: The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Learners facilitate the learning of others.

- In which states of mind do we wish all learners to become more resourceful as a result of their learning?
- What has empowered them?
- How will this new empowerment be demonstrated?
- How will learners reflect on their progress and apply new understandings?
- How will we establish and communicate new learning goals?
- How will learners lead in their own growth?

NEW PLATEAUS

Learners exceed expectations and are now independent learners.

- How has the learner's approach to learning situations changed?
- What resources and support are needed to further independent exploration?
- How will learners reflect with others and identify what coaching they need?
- In what ways is feedback articulated and used to establish further empowerment?
- How is this learning shared with others and used to empower others?

(Adapted from work of Costa & Garmston, 1998.)

drivers for the direction professional development and collaboration take.

MOVING FROM MATURING TO PANORAMIC OUTCOMES

On a visit to the school to learn about this collaboration, Superintendent Diane Zimmerman listened to a teacher and excited students describe what they had learned about the regions of California using drama and improvisation. Zimmerman realized that these teachers and students had embarked on a challenging journey to change the way they think about teaching and learning. The change was palpable, but difficult to put into words. Just two years before, the school was focused on how to use the new music lab in instructional activities. Now everyone was involved in complex conversations about how students learn deeply.

To gain clarity about our journey, we use the work of Costa and Garmston (1998) on maturing outcomes as a lens for our reflection (see "Stages of Learning ..." at left). Zimmerman notes, "Although we did not set out to think about maturing outcomes, we were excited to discover that we could reflect on this work and gain deeper insights using this framework." Costa and Garmston suggest that as teachers gain experience, their thinking about the outcomes of instruction develops beyond activity and content to higher-order thinking. They divide higher-order thinking into two outcomes — process and disposition or habits of mind. So, activity and content are gateway outcomes for all new teachers. Then, as teachers gain experience, we would hope that their outcome focus would mature and include thinking strategies

Just two years before, the school was focused on how to use the new music lab in instructional activities. Now everyone was involved in complex conversations about how students learn deeply.

— those from the disciplines and also habits of mind.

As we began to reflect on our work, we found that through focusing on processes and dispositions, teachers made rapid shifts toward complex learner-centric outcomes. The visual and performing arts are process-rich disciplines, and thus the bid to integrate arts into all lessons created a rich forum for process conversations. These conversations integrating process into the lessons became a powerful catalyst for the examination of beliefs about student engagement. Teachers gained more precision in their content outcomes, and as a result, would completely rethink their activities. Now classroom activities were tightly coupled to process or disposition outcomes.

We are finding that when teachers engage in complex planning and reflection, they take control of their own learning while finding ways for students to do the same. The principal has the responsibility to articulate how efforts to teach at the process and disposition levels improve instruction. In addition, the principal reinforces language that supports collective learning and fosters improvements in classroom practices. This is why we are using job-embedded professional development followed by collaborative reflection and planning.

When teachers engage in complex planning and reflection, they take control of their own learning while finding ways for students to do the same.

To summarize, expert teachers facilitate activities designed to support content that generates integrative processes and fosters productive dispositions about learning. To work as a school to accomplish these ends is the true work of any productive learning community. To frame our conversations on positive expectations, we picked up "panoramic outcomes" from the Costa and Garmston article and believe this term describes our achievement.

Old Adobe Elementary School
Petaluma, Calif.

Enrollment: 268
Staff: 32
Racial/ethnic mix:
- **White:** 71%
- **Black:** 2%
- **Hispanic:** 16%
- **Asian/Pacific Islander:** 6%
- **Native American:** 1%
- **Other:** 4%

Limited English proficient: 15%
Languages spoken: 8
Free/reduced lunch: 24%
Special education: 6%
Contact: Dawn Walker, administrative office assistant, dwalker@oldadobe.org

ACHIEVING PANORAMIC OUTCOMES

The cumulative result of the Old Adobe School functioning as a learning community while infusing the classroom curriculum with the arts is evident throughout the school. Examples of increased student learning abound at Old Adobe School. We see evidence in student writing, student presentations and performances, and students justifying their thinking as a routine part of classroom discussions.

Old Adobe Elementary is lucky to have high-functioning students, and yet we have not achieved the goal of meeting all students' needs. We are confident that this will happen as a result of our journey and that our most challenged students will begin to love school in the same way as their more advantaged peers.

In 1916, John Dewey stressed the importance of a school becoming an environment where stakeholders interact, learn together, and improve their service to students. Like Dewey, we believe that schools are hungry for clarity in purpose and a single-minded focus on the improvement of learning. At Old Adobe Elementary, we have chosen the arts, a discipline rich in process outcome opportunities. However, all disciplines have process skills that can bring the focus needed to start the journey, and all schools can come to consensus on the enduring dispositions to be modeled in everything that they do.

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STATE OF THE PROFESSION revisited

Global statistics bring fresh thinking to inquiry into professional development

BY BRUCE R. JOYCE

Most approaches to professional development have not been accompanied by programmatic research, leaving us with too little information to guide policy and practice. To bolster the knowledge base in the field, the National Staff Development Council is engaged in a three-phase inquiry into staff development. NSDC published the technical report of the first phase in February 2009 (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos), and a subsequent summary in the Spring 2009 issue of *JSD* (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos). NSDC disseminated information from this study widely through other publications and press coverage. My comments refer to the

Editor's note: *JSD* asked Bruce Joyce, a leading education researcher, to offer his perspective on *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad* (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). A summary of the report was published in the Spring 2009 *JSD*. Here are his comments.

PISA (Program in International Student Assessment) scores and rankings by country, 2006

COUNTRY	Mean score science	Country rank in science	Mean score math	Country rank in math
Finland	563	1	548	1
Canada	534	2	527	5
Japan	531	3	523	6
New Zealand	530	4	522	7
Australia	527	5	520	9
Netherlands	525	6	531	3
Korea	522	7	547	2
Germany	516	8	504	14
United Kingdom	515	9	495	18
Czech Republic	513	10	510	11
Switzerland	512	11	530	4
Austria	511	12	505	13
Belgium	510	13	520	8
Ireland	508	14	501	16
Hungary	504	15	491	21
Sweden	503	16	502	15
OECD average	500	NA	498	NA
Poland	498	17	495	19
Denmark	496	18	513	10
France	495	19	496	17
Iceland	491	20	506	12
United States	**489**	**21**	**474**	**25**
Slovak Republic	488	22	492	20
Spain	488	23	480	24
Norway	487	24	490	22
Luxembourg	486	25	490	23
Italy	475	26	462	27
Portugal	474	27	466	26
Greece	473	28	459	28
Turkey	424	29	424	29
Mexico	410	30	406	30

Source: Wei, R.C., Darling-Hammond, L., Andree, A., Richardson, N., & Orphanos, S. (2009, February). *Professional learning in the learning profession: A status report on teacher development in the United States and abroad: Technical report.* Dallas, TX: NSDC.

technical report — the most complete version.

That a national organization should tackle its knowledge problem directly is wonderful. And the report is ambitious. It "is intended to provide policy makers, researchers, and school leaders with a teacher-development research base that can lead to powerful professional learning, instructional improvement, and student learning" (Wei et al., p. iii). I believe it will have a positive effect on discussions of practice.

In my reflections on this work, I'll focus on the most unique feature of the effort, the authors' attempt to mine international comparisons of student achievement and studies of teachers' workdays around the world. This strategy brings fresh thinking to inquiry on professional development. The authors reflected on research conducted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on student achievement in science and mathematics and the instructional duties of teachers in OECD's 30 member countries.

The report confirms some of my current beliefs and extends some of them, such as:

- Our schools can be improved.
- The learning environment for educators and students needs to be improved.
- Staff development is a critical avenue to school improvement, and it can use substantial improvement.
- The experiences of educators in other countries may help educators in the U.S.

These beliefs give us direction as we struggle to learn what to do and how to do it in professional development.

That a national organization should tackle its knowledge problem directly is wonderful. And the report is ambitious.

And I agree wholeheartedly with this core position from the *JSD* article: "Effective professional development is intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice; focuses on the teaching and learning of specific academic content; … and builds strong working relationships among teachers" (Darling-Hammond et al., p.44).

How does this statement hold up as the authors examine international data and draw conclusions? They do not mince words.

In the preface: "As this report shows, such an approach to professional learning [the one summarized just above] has become the norm in many countries that are our competitors, but is the exception here. … [T]he kind of high-intensity, job-embedded collaborative learning that is most effective is not a common feature of professional development across most states, districts, and schools in the United States" (Wei et al., p.iii).

In the conclusion: "Comparisons of American teachers' participation in

professional development with that of teachers in the international community also demonstrate that the United States is substantially behind other OECD nations in providing the kinds of powerful professional learning opportunities that are more likely to build [teachers'] capacity and have significant impact on student learning" (Wei et al., p. 61).

Those strong statements deserve careful attention. Let's look at some of the OECD data as we consider the reasoning the report authors present to support those assertions.

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

OECD's research includes the development of tests, questionnaires, and self-studies that are used with samples of students and educators in the member countries. The best sources are annual *Education at a Glance* documents (see OECD, 2007).

The NSDC team drew on data collected in PISA (Program in International Student Assessment), which measures achievement by 15-year-old students in various subject areas (science and mathematics in its 2007 document).

The PISA comparisons are fascinating. The table on p. 47 showing scores and rankings by country in 2006 was used in the NSDC technical report (Wei et al., p 19).

The NSDC authors emphasize the embarrassing position of the United States as they search for information from other countries that may help the U.S. improve.

PISA REVISITED

As I looked at these data, I had more questions than firm conclusions. I have heard colleagues suggest that the United States' rank is a result of demography — that is, the diversity of the U.S. population creates disadvantages in comparisons. That is probably not so in the case of PISA. OECD has gone to great lengths to take socioeconomic status into account — a tricky business with the variety in the 30 OECD countries. We should not casually dismiss the comparative data.

The countries on which the authors focused are important in the inquiry. The authors concentrated on the European countries and Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Japan. After looking at achievement, they examined information about the time teachers teach classes in relation to the amount of contracted, in-school time available.

Let's look at the distribution to focus on the nature of the highest-achieving countries and the crowd of countries around the middle.

ENGLISH-SPEAKING COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES

Three of the countries with the highest average scores are English-speaking commonwealth countries (Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), and the United Kingdom ranks ninth in science. Should we initiate a study designed to learn what we can about how those nations' conduct of education may be different, including how they conduct professional learning? The U.K. is engaged in an interesting longitudinal study, but the results thus far are confusing (see Office of Manpower Economics, 2008). Over time, the findings will become clearer.

A real puzzlement is the rank of these four countries that have so much in common and are in many ways closely connected with the U.S. We do know that a signal strength of these countries' staff development is its use to promote quality in curriculum and instruction in core areas.

We also need to consider whether factors having little to do with staff development are responsible for their achievement. Two possibilities come to mind:

- These countries make little use of interscholastic sports competition. Rather, their athletics are centered in out-of-school organizations, generally called clubs. The position of interscholastic sports in the United States is a real difference both in investment of time and energy and in the status given to athletic accomplishment compared to intellectual attainment.
- In Australia, high school students select academic "majors" in the core curriculum areas that may affect achievement. I am not familiar with high school curriculum in the other commonwealth countries, but we might try to learn whether there are differences in curriculum and instruction that might be factors in generating high achievement.

THE CENTER OF THE DISTRIBUTION

Looking at the whole distribution of PISA science scores, I conclude that U.S. scores are similar to many of the other countries rather than hugely different from them. The averages in the table on p. 45 are standard scores (referred to as score points). The OECD average is 500. One standard deviation above that is score point 600. Two is 700, and so on. One standard deviation below the mean is expressed as 400. In terms of percentile differences, 10 score points translate into about 3.4 percentile points, 15 into about 5.1.

In science, the averages of 18 of the 30 OECD countries lie between 486 and 516. In other words, 60% of the countries, along with the U.S., are crowded within about five percentile points of the OECD average. That such a large number of the industrialized nations' 15-year-olds achieve at such similar levels in science is worth noting.

With respect to the conclusions drawn by the NSDC authors, if there

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He has worked abroad extensively, particularly in India, Hong Kong, Egypt, and in Europe, primarily in the U.K., where Open University Press just published the third edition of *Models of Learning/Tools for Teaching*, with David Hopkins and Emily Calhoun.

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WITH APPRECIATION

I thank several colleagues who have been very helpful as we have reflected on the report, including my colleague and co-author, David Hopkins. He led me to Andreas Schleicher, who heads the OECD division that generates the *Education at a Glance* reports and special reports for each country. He has answered some important questions on the PISA effort and the information underlying the *Education at a Glance* reports.

— Bruce Joyce

are differences from the U.S. in time allotted to professional development, those are not reflected in achievement in those countries.

TIME TEACHERS ARE IN CLASS

The OECD studies indicate that teachers in many other countries spend less time in the teaching of classes than do teachers in the United States (see Chapter D of the 2007 *Education at a Glance*).

The NSDC authors posit that poor achievement of U.S. students results from the smaller proportions of contracted time that European and some Asian teachers are with classes as instructors. The larger amount of time not used in instruction is occupied in collaborative planning and staff development.

I don't believe that we know with certainty how the noninstructional time is used. We should conduct serious inquiry into what those teachers do with the contracted, noninstructional time. If part of that time is used in collaborative planning and study, we should learn what that means and what types of collaboration occur. If part of that time is in other forms of professional development, we need to find out how that time is used and how it affects teaching.

Importantly, I don't think that average achievement in many of the other countries differs much from the U.S average. That does not relieve us from tracking down how teachers from other countries use their time.

LEARNING FROM OTHER NATIONS

The United States has much to learn from other countries. In Finland, the provisions of care for children from birth on are outstanding. Possibly none are raised without assiduous physical and social care, health care, and early education. South Korea consistently has comparatively high mathematics achievement and 95% of its math teachers have majors in the area compared with 75% in the U.S. (see Kang & Hong, 2008). Japan's teachers instruct classes many fewer hours than ours, but class sizes are about a third larger. The school year is a month longer. The average score of its students is about the 64th percentile of U.S. distribution. In the Netherlands, child care is thorough: From birth through age 18, all families receive a stipend every three months to support their children (Shorto, 2009). Among other things, Shorto mentions that a 2007 UNICEF study of the well-being of children in 21 developed countries showed the Dutch at the top and American children second from the bottom (Shorto, p. 47). Americans have much to learn from international comparisons of developed countries, and some of it will shock us.

Some thoughts on a few other key questions:

- **National curriculum standards.** The United States has traditionally used curriculum guidelines as general directions. Individual differences and diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, capacity, learning disabilities, socioeconomic status, and primary language are to be addressed with the result that modifications are normal. In the U.S., we have recently begun to worry that some modifications actually have a weakening effect that can defeat their purpose.

  The extent to which national curriculums in some countries regiment instruction may be a force with good and bad sides. Strong implementation of set curriculums can ensure that students have exposure to the same processes and materials regardless of their backgrounds. On the other

hand, as Kang and Hong (2008) point out with respect to South Korea, the national curriculum reduces the options for dealing with individual differences among students.

- **Instructional materials.**

Schools in the U.S. rely on private companies to produce textbooks and other materials. These companies can be driven by marketplace considerations rather than scholarship and higher levels of curriculum guidelines. In some other countries, the governments produce materials or supervise private contractors closely. We might try to learn which approach generates the highest-quality materials.

- **Class size differences.**

Many of the other countries have larger class sizes than in the U.S., and yet their achievement is equal to or better than ours. For example, in South Korea, the average class size in mathematics is about 35, where in the United States it is less than 25. Does this relate in some way to higher achievement? I recently visited a high school math class of just five average to above-average students. The environment was deadly. The instructor had no idea how to generate synergy in such a small group. Smaller may not always be better.

On the humorous side, imagine selling the idea that if we enlarged our classes, teachers could spend less time teaching and more time for other professional activities.

FINAL THOUGHTS

While I do not come to the conclusions that the NSDC report authors do in terms of student achievement and professional development in other countries, I don't want anyone to think that I am not in favor of reorganizing the school into professional learning communities nor in favor of greatly increasing time allocated to communal professional study.

We need programmatic research that helps us learn from international comparisons. And we need more work on some of our domestic models of professional development, school improvement, and curriculum and instruction. The NSDC authors acknowledge the need for sustained inquiry on mentoring and coaching, as Emily Calhoun and I do in our forthcoming book on models of staff development, where we attempt to squeeze guidelines from small amounts of solid data.

We need criteria for judging the quality of professional development, but we also need to pay attention to the types of staff development that can meet them. It is one thing to advocate the collaborative study of teaching and quite another to select or even build the approaches that generate productive collaborative inquiry.

Professional learning communities need much more support than some advocates acknowledge, and development of models of learning will be essential to their success. Even the currently heavily criticized menus offered on designated staff development days can be improved substantially with a little creative effort and the application of current knowledge.

The What Works guidelines for research from the Department of Education have such a narrow stricture that much existing and potential research is arbitrarily excluded. With colleagues in Canada, we recently completed a study in K-2 with 187 teachers and more than 4,000 students, but it included all the students, not random assignment. What Works guidelines exclude such studies as well as all descriptive studies, such as the OECD research. I am an advocate of well-designed and rigorously conducted research, but not of ignoring the logics of the various legitimate designs where random assignment to alternative treatments or placebos is not necessary or possible.

We are grateful to the NSDC team and its effort and appreciate the opportunity to comment on its report. We have some very good knowledge and need a great deal more. Educational research is not easy; interpreting it requires an interplay of frames of reference. That we differ in interpretation is not important. That we not communicate would be to our great disadvantage.

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Articles and books are among the most accessible and economic ways educators can bring in outside expertise and new knowledge to inform their thinking around improving practice and reaching all students. Beginning with this issue, *JSD* will occasionally offer a selection of useful readings around a specific focus, chosen and annotated by educators with deep knowledge of the relevant literature in the focus areas.

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SPOTLIGHT on special education

BY BELINDA DUNNICK KARGE AND BETH LASKY

With the everyday juggling act principals perform, they have a daunting challenge to keep up with the latest research in education. At the same time, the literature documents an intensive need for increased professional development of principals in special education (Goar, Schwenn, & Boyer, 1997; Lasky & Karge, 2006; McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004). To assist these busy leaders, we provide 10 must-reads to help administrators enhance their knowledge and skills, and the skills of their staffs, in special education. In some cases, the articles have been widely cited in journals; in other cases, the articles contain good solid timely advice or suggested best practice.

➔ "Access to the core curriculum: Critical ingredients for student success"
D. Fisher & N. Frey, *Remedial and Special Education,* May-June 2001

1 The reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 requires that schools provide services to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment whenever possible — that is, they should have as many opportunities as possible to learn in the same environment and with the same options as their nondisabled peers. The philosophy of educating students alongside their peers is honorable, yet sometimes challenging to implement. In "Access to the Core Curriculum: Critical Ingredients for Student Success," based on three case studies, Fisher and Frey describe useful strategies for helping students with significant disabilities to access the core curriculum. The authors provide specific examples of how students with disabilities can access the core curriculum with appropriate accommodations and modifications. These ideas are important for an administrator to share with teachers who have students with disabilities integrated into their classroom.

Suggestions for using the readings

→ **Encourage self-assessment. Choose one article for use at a district-level discussion among all principals. Encourage principals to examine their own skills and knowledge and to identify areas for further growth.**

→ **Demonstrate instructional strategies. For those articles that outline specific instructional strategies, ask staff members to read the article and then observe a skilled coach or teacher experienced with the strategies to demonstrate a model lesson. Follow up with a facilitated discussion.**

→ **"Rethinking inclusion: Schoolwide applications"**
W. Sailor & B. Roger, *Phi Delta Kappan*, March 2005

2 "Rethinking Inclusion: Schoolwide Applications" outlines the use of specialized accommodations and modifications, such as those suggested in the article above, to enhance the learning of all students. The authors advocate for a schoolwide approach where students with disabilities are not removed from general education classrooms and all supports and services are designed to enhance the learning of all children, not just the students with disabilities. The article covers evidence-based practices that work for general education teachers as well as special education teachers. The No Child Left Behind Act establishes the baseline that all public education students are to be considered general education students. The article illustrates how this is possible through a case study and lists six guiding principles for any site working to implement a schoolwide program. The article concludes with three legal case studies and an explanation of why the schools highlighted in the case studies did not achieve true legal compliance.

→ **"Making collaboration work in inclusive high school classrooms: Recommendations for principals"**
J.T. Hines, *Intervention in School and Clinic,* 2008

3 "Making Collaboration Work in Inclusive High School Classrooms: Recommendations for Principals" also covers the concept of inclusion. The author outlines four important conditions for successful student collaboration. The description of each condition begins with a short vignette that describes a challenge teachers face in inclusive classrooms, followed by a discussion of how the principal can address this issue. The author offers suggestions for opening communication, sharing leadership, developing goals, and resolving conflicts. Although the title refers to high schools, this article is appropriate for all school levels.

→ **"Inclusion of learners with autism spectrum disorders in general education settings"**
R.L. Simpson, S.R. de Boer-Ott, & B. Smith-Myles, *Topics in Language Disorders,* April-June 2003

4 The fastest-growing category of disabilities is autism. There are many challenges to including these students because of the nature, severity, depth, and breadth of the autism spectrum. Simpson, deBoer-Ott, and Smith-Myles, authors of "Inclusion of Learners With Autism Spectrum Disorders in General Education Settings," introduce the Autism Spectrum Disorder Inclusion Collaboration Model. This model offers guidelines and supports that can facilitate the successful inclusion of people with autism in general education settings. The article defines autism, explains the debate over least restrictive environment, includes a lengthy checklist of instructional methods used with students with autism spectrum disorder within general education classrooms, and provides five major components for schoolwide consideration.

→ **"Co-teaching: Guidelines for creating effective practices"**
L. Cook & M. Friend, *Focus on Exceptional Children*, November 1995

5 Cook and Friend have produced seminal work in the field of co-teaching among general education and special education teachers. Co-teaching is defined as "two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a group of students with diverse learning needs" (p. 15). Any administration team could use their article, "Co-teaching: Guidelines for Creating Effective Practices." The article outlines the big ideas and rationale behind co-teaching along with suggested classroom practices. Although these authors have written many subsequent articles, this key article suggests who should be involved in co-teaching and highlights major topics for team discussion when a school decides to adopt

→ **Select a reading for a schoolwide discussion. Ask selected staff members to come prepared with background information on two or three key definitions or concepts to extend the learning. Alternatively, use articles with distinct sections in a jigsaw fashion.**

→ **Promote bookclub activities. Some articles will be ideal for grade-level or subject-area learning teams researching a critical issue such as autism or co-teaching.**

→ **Provide an article to spark a discussion among stakeholders about school- or districtwide reform.**

co-teaching practices. Such topics include instructional beliefs, planning parity signals, confidentiality, noise, classroom routines, discipline, feedback, and pet peeves.

→ **"Research into practice through professional development"**
M.F. Little & D. Houston, *Remedial and Special Education,* March-April 2003

6 In "Research Into Practice Through Professional Development," Little and Houston present suggestions for coaching teachers to understand scientifically based theoretical approaches to quality instructional methods for students with special needs. They recommend that school leaders ask teachers to identify their needs, then group teachers in teams based on their needs. Once in teams, the teachers work together to research a specific need. The article includes a questionnaire designed to help teachers determine if the research-based approach they selected meets effective instructional practices criteria. The authors encourage teachers to try the strategy in their classrooms. The authors provide a critical teaching behaviors checklist for team or individual evaluation of the lesson.

→ **"Instructional components that predict treatment outcomes for students with learning disabilities: Support for a combined strategy and direct instruction model"**
H.L. Swanson, *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice,* Summer 1999

7 When administrators are supporting special education teachers, it is essential that they encourage their special education teachers to use research-based practices. Swanson has provided critical information to the field of learning disabilities by identifying the instructional components across 180 intervention studies that best contribute to academic success for students with learning disabilities. The results from "Instructional Components That Predict Treatment Outcomes for Students With Learning Disabilities: Support for a Combined Strategy and Direct Instructional Model," suggest that a combination of cognitive strategies and direct instruction yields the best outcomes. Specifically, this article highlights sequencing, drill-repetition and practice-review, segmentations, directed questioning and responses, control difficulty or processing demands of a task, technology, group instruction, supplements to teacher involvement, and strategy cues as specific instructional components that increase the chance of an intervention's success.

→ **"Responsiveness-to-intervention: Definitions, evidence, and implications for the learning disabilities construct"**
D. Fuchs, D. Mock, P.L. Morgan, & C.L. Young, *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, August 2003

8 When the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was rewritten and signed into law in 2004, many sections of the law reflected new ideas about learning disabilities and the concept of a pre-identification strategy called Response to Intervention (RTI). Unfortunately, the regulations specific to RTI have not been established, and while everyone is talking about the concept, no one knows how RTI will be used in practice. In "Responsiveness-to-Intervention: Definitions, Evidence, and Implications for the Learning Disabilities Construct," Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, and Young cover the use of IQ tests for identifying students with disabilities. This approach is often considered flawed because it is a discrepancy model: It measures the difference between how a student performs currently and the level they are expected to perform at academically. RTI is often considered a viable alternative. RTI is typically described as a three-tier approach that provides gradually more intensive help to students with academic challenges. Some educators recommend trying these approaches before assessing a student for a learning disabil-

ity. The authors describe two different methods of using RTI and encourage readers to discuss which method might work in their school.

➔ "Meeting the needs of students with disabilities: Experience and confidence of principals"
B. Lasky & B. Karge, *National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin,* 2006

9 "Meeting the Needs of Students With Disabilities: Experience and Confidence of Principals" examines the formal training of more than 200 principals in a variety of school districts. The study reported a need for increased training of principals in special education. If principals are to be leaders in schoolwide change, they need to understand the concepts behind the changes in special education over the past few years. The article provides a summary of DiPaola and Walther-Thomas' (2003) six skill and knowledge areas that principals need to develop to ensure the growth of students with disabilities, and concludes with Lasky and Karge's resources and recommendations for implementation of each area.

➔ "Schools attuned: A model for collaborative intervention"
I. Weiner & M.W. Murawski, *Intervention in School and Clinic,* May 2005

10 In order to implement any form of RTI, schools must come together with a shared vision and common principles and vocabulary. Weiner and Murawski advocate for the use of a professional development program, Schools Attuned (Levine, 2002), as the basis for a three-tier collaborative model in "Schools Attuned: A Model for Collaborative Intervention." The Schools Attuned model stresses that all students learn differently, and educators and parents need to identify students' strengths and areas in need of improvement. Weiner and Murawski summarize the major ideas of Schools Attuned, the associated comprehensive training, and describe how the program aligns with the collaborative model. They then discuss how Schools Attuned can be used as a three-tier model to intervene when students demonstrate individual needs, similar to the levels for behavioral intervention used in many schools. These tiers progress from providing schoolwide interventions for all students, additional support for those students with additional concerns, and then more intensive support for individual students for whom previous interventions have not proved effective. Weiner and Murawski conclude their article by discussing the benefits and limitations of their proposal and how it will assist in building a collaborative school environment

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HOW CONVERSATIONS CAN CHANGE EDUCATORS' AND STUDENTS' LIVES

In Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, one character asks another, "How did you go bankrupt?" The response: "Gradually, then suddenly." I believe that our careers, organizations, relationships, and our very lives succeed or fail gradually then suddenly, one conversation at a time. The marriage we cherished or lost, the peer respect that deepened or declined, the job in which we shined or bombed, the students we inspired or bored. Each of us has arrived at today's results one successful, failed, or missing conversation at a time. In fact, the greatest obstacles to our individual and collective success and happiness are very likely the conversations we simply didn't have, the ones we've avoided for weeks, months, or years.

I began my career as a high school teacher — English, poetry, speech, mass media, drama. Since the publication of *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work & in Life, One Conversation at a Time* (Penguin, 2002), I have been eager to introduce the mind-set and skill set of fierce conversations to educators and students. To start out my series of columns for *JSD*, I will clarify why my tent is pitched on conversations, what I mean by "fierce," and why fierce conversations are essential for a collaborative culture and for student success.

YOUR MOST VALUABLE CURRENCY

Eventually, if we are paying attention, it dawns on us. "This ongoing, robust conversation I have been having with my wife (husband, partner, child, friend, boss, colleague, student) is not about our relationship. The conversation *is* the relationship."

If the conversation stops, all of the possibilities for the relationship become smaller, until one day we overhear ourselves in midsentence, making ourselves smaller in every encounter, behaving as if we are just the space around our shoes (worse yet, behaving as if the person in front of us is just the space around his or her shoes), engaged in yet another three-minute conversation so empty of meaning it crackles.

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Your most valuable currency is not money (though one could argue this in today's struggling economy), nor is it IQ, multiple degrees, fluency in three-letter acronyms, good looks, charisma, self-sufficiency, years of experience, or your ability to build a really cool PowerPoint deck. It is not the number of technical gizmos attached to your person, committees on which you serve, articles you've published, or students who have passed through your doors.

Your most valuable currency is relationships, emotional capital. You may have smarts galore, but without emotional capital, your great plans, dreams, and strategies will stall. As Einstein said, "We should take care not to make the intellect our god; it has, of course, powerful muscles, but no personality. It cannot lead; it can only serve."

In each issue of *JSD*, Susan Scott will explore aspects of communication that encourage meaningful collaboration. All columns are available at www.nsdc.org.

WHAT IS A "FIERCE" CONVERSATION?

But why "fierce"? In Roget's Thesaurus, the word fierce has the following synonyms: robust, intense, strong, powerful, passionate, eager, unbridled, uncurbed, untamed. In its simplest form, a fierce conversation is one in which we come out from behind ourselves into the conversation and make it real.

While many people are afraid of real — "I doubt that saying what I really think would be a career-enhancing response" — it is the unreal conversations that should scare us, because they are incredibly expensive. Every organization wants to believe it's having a real conversation with its employees, its customers — in your case, educators and students — and with the unknown future that is emerging around it. Every educator wants to have conversations that build his or her world of meaning.

What do fierce conversations accomplish? The four objectives are to:

1. Interrogate reality (in order to...);
2. Provoke learning (so that we may...);
3. Tackle our toughest challenges (and in the process...); and
4. Enrich relationships.

This may seem pretty simple, yet many of us fall short of these objectives, which are essential for successful collaboration. For example, there are multiple, competing realities existing simultaneously on any given subject, including the approaches that work best for particular students or assessments that give us the information we need. If we

want to get it right for all of us, rather than be right, we will clarify our perspective and the reasons for it. We will invite pushback, really invite it, versus going through the motions, in the genuine hope that we will be different when the conversation is over, that we will have been influenced. People with this mind-set and skill set are rare creatures who enrich relationships and acquire emotional capital every day and whose presence at meetings is actively sought and valued. I'll walk you through how this works in a future column.

And while my goals for fierce schools and classrooms certainly include improved student achievement, they also aim to increase teachers' ability to navigate important conversations with peers, parents, and school leaders, to create an increasingly collaborative workplace. This won't happen by talking about it. It will happen because educators model it every day, for each other, for their students, in every discussion, in every classroom.

In the first of Bill Gates' annual letters to the Gates Foundation in January 2009, he wrote, "If you want your child to get the best education possible, it is actually more important to get him assigned to a great teacher than to a great school. Whenever I talk to teachers, it is clear that they want to be great, but they need better tools so they can measure their progress and keep improving" (Gates, 2009).

Consider that, while no single conversation is guaranteed to change the trajectory of a career, a relationship, or a life, any single conversation can.

In a *New Yorker* magazine article titled "Most Likely to Succeed," Malcolm Gladwell (2008) says that in standardized tests that measure the academic performance of students, a good teacher trumps a school, class size or curriculum design, hands down. The difference a good teacher makes, even in a bad school, can amount to a year and a half's worth of learning in a single year; whereas, a bad teacher in a good school may teach half a year's worth of learning in a year and a half!

What makes for a bad teacher? According to Gladwell, things like rigid control, broadcasting from the front of the room, and yes/no, right/wrong feedback. What makes for a good teacher? Things like creating a "holding space" for lively interaction, flexibility in how students become engaged in a topic, a regard for student perspective, the ability to personalize the material for each student, responding to questions and answers with sensitivity, and providing high-quality feedback "where there is a back-and-forth exchange to get a deeper understanding" (Gladwell, 2008). The same culture surely applies to teachers creating a collaborative culture with one another.

You may already know this and be eager to raise the bar on the quality of your interactions, in and out of the classroom. Consider that, while no single conversation is guaranteed to change the trajectory of a career, a relationship, or a life, any single conversation can. How will you create a highly collaborative culture in your organization? How will you become the fine leader you wish to become? What can you do to improve student achievement and shape healthy, productive world citizens?

What makes for a good teacher? Things like creating a "holding space" for lively interaction, flexibility in how students become engaged in a topic, a regard for student perspective, the ability to personalize the material for each student, responding to questions and answers with sensitivity, and providing high-quality feedback "where there is a back-and-forth exchange to get a deeper understanding" (Gladwell, 2008).

The key message is: If you want to become a great teacher, a great leader, gain the capacity to connect with students and colleagues at a deep level ... or lower your aim.

Human connectivity is the skill that captures the ideal combination of intellect plus emotion, so the goal of this column is to give you and your colleagues practice with fierce ideas, principles, and conversational models. In the meantime, don't delay. Take it one conversation at a time, with the following mind-set:

- My life is succeeding or failing, gradually then suddenly, one conversation at a time.
- The conversation is the relationship.
- All aspects of my life will be enriched when I become willing and able to connect with others at a deep level.
- I will come out from behind myself, into each conversation I have, and make it real.

My hope is that you will sit beside someone you care for and begin. Let me know how it goes.

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PINCHED YET PROFESSIONAL

Stimulus funds, credit crunch, ARRA, budget cuts … It's impossible to hide from the latest news about the state of the economy. As difficult as the economy is at a personal level, school systems across the country are also struggling to find solutions to applying limited funds to seemingly unlimited challenges.

Professional learning, as NSDC President Charles Mason says in his column (p. 7), is often among the first things to be cut from a budget. How can school leaders respond to that instinct? Two *JSD* columnists, NSDC Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh and Lea Arnau, tackle that question from different perspectives. Like Mason, they see the opening such economic circumstances provide.

The tool on the followng page is a protocol for a group to use in discussing a piece of text. Use the tool and one or more of the columns from this issue of *JSD* to facilitate a discussion around the difficult questions the economic environment provokes. Take Mason's challenge: To be among the best organizations that don't cut learning priorities.

Three levels of text protocol

Purpose

To deepen understanding of a text and explore implications for participants' work.

Facilitation

Stick to the time limits. Each round takes up to 5 minutes per person in a group. Emphasize the need to be careful of air time during the brief group response segment. Do one to three rounds. The protocol can be used as a prelude to a text-based discussion or by itself.

Roles

Facilitator/timekeeper (who also participates); participants.

Process

1. Sit in a circle and identify a facilitator/timekeeper.

2. If participants have not done so ahead of time, have them read the text and identify passages (and a couple of back-ups) that they believe may have important implications for their work.

3. Have the group take part in one to three rounds. A round consists of:
   - One person using up to three minutes to complete three tasks:
     LEVEL 1: Read aloud the passage she or he has selected.
     LEVEL 2: Say what she or he thinks about the passage (interpretation, connection to past experiences, etc.).
     LEVEL 3: Say what she or he sees as the implications for his or her work.
   - The group responding (for a total of two minutes or less) to what has been said.

After the group has given each member a turn for one to three rounds, debrief the process.

Find more tools

This is one of many protocols included in *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning, 2nd Edition* (NSDC, 2008). Turn to *Powerful Designs* for a deeper understanding of effective strategies for collaborative work along with hundreds of supporting tools. Available at store.nsdc.org.

Source: National School Reform Faculty, www.nsrfharmony.org. Used with permission.

RICH LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES EXIST IN A TOUGH ECONOMY

We live in uncertain times. With the recent federal stimulus package, school systems are receiving the single largest influx of new dollars ever, yet many districts will still be forced to cut programs in order to meet budget requirements. Staff development, like many departments and budget-line items, will undergo cuts. As a result, district leaders are asking how they might respond to these circumstances.

Tough economic circumstances give district leaders a powerful reason to examine all district initiatives supported by professional development. I suggest that district leaders begin this process by bringing all central office administrators to the table to discuss their departments' priorities. Prioritize the programs and expenditures according to student performance data and alignment with district priorities. Determine as a group which efforts should go forward, which should be tabled, and which may finally be abandoned. Share with all stakeholders the group's decisions. By sharing this information, central administration demonstrates its focus on what is most important. Assist school leadership teams to implement a similar process to prioritize their efforts.

Here are ideas for maximizing the remaining resources and building support for increasing the investment when new funds become available.

1. FOCUS ON STUDENTS.

Limit professional development to teacher learning experiences that will most immediately enhance student learning. This will require the district to provide school leaders as well as teams of teachers with student data that allow them to identify specific student needs as the driver for professional learning.

2. FOCUS ON TEACHERS.

Once school leaders identify student priorities from the data, ensure that teachers have the guidance necessary to identify what they need to learn to address identified student needs. In tough economic times, we may even have to consider limiting professional development to those full-time teachers who address subject areas where students are tested. Such a decision will not be popular. However, we need to make sure that where students are held accountable, they have the teachers most prepared to provide effective teaching every day.

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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.

3. PROMOTE TEAM-BASED LEARNING.

It may seem contradictory to suggest that during lean times, we find ways to establish time during the school week for teachers to learn together, plan lessons together, and write common assessments. Actually, there is no better time to recognize that challenging fiscal circumstances require that we tap the expertise of all teachers so that all students benefit from their knowledge and expertise. In addition, sympathetic parents may be more willing to support early-release days or late-start days so that the school can accommodate its need to invest in its teaching staff. Ask unions to consider waivers to current contract stipulations that may impact changes to the work schedule with the intention to revisit when funding levels return to pre-2009-10 school budget levels.

4. APPLY RESEARCH TO DECISION MAKING.

Limit professional development to teacher learning experiences that research and/or experience indicate will increase student learning. This is not a time to experiment with this year's new thing. Rather, use this opportunity to invest in proven strategies for addressing specific needs. Eliminate one-shot workshops, catalogs, payment for unrelated graduate courses, one-size fits all conferences, and "cafeteria" staff development days.

5. CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS FOR PARTICIPATION.

Require teachers who participate in intensive school-level or district-sponsored initiatives to commit to learning, application, and assessment. Begin each initiative or

process with a review of the purpose, the change teachers are expected to demonstrate, and the outcomes teachers are to document. Use technology to stay on top of teachers' application of new practices. Provide support for classroom application, document impact, and evaluate results.

6. USE LOCAL EXPERTS AND EXPERTISE.

In addition to team-based learning led by teachers, highlight and use local teachers who have demonstrated unusual success in increasing student achievement and who have the human relations skills necessary to help other teachers develop and apply similar approaches. Establish systems for expert teachers or coaches to teach, model, co-teach, and support other teachers in using their most effective practices.

7. TERMINATE DISTRICTWIDE TEACHER ASSEMBLIES.

Don't waste precious resources on a beginning-of-the-school-year districtwide pep talk by the latest high-priced motivational speaker or one-size-fits-all professional development consultant. Save the assembly for the end of the year to celebrate the results of the focus on teachers and students.

8. SUPPORT SUBJECT-AREA NETWORKING.

Provide incentives of flexible time, recognition, or nonmonetary support to encourage teachers to voluntarily form subject-specific networks to transfer best practices across the school system. These networks can serve as powerful replacements for attendance at external workshops and conferences.

9. MAKE GREATER USE OF OTHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES.

Consider the vast array of free and dependable resources to support professional development. Use state department of education consultants, regional education service agencies, textbook company consultants, teacher organizations and other professional associations, and many others that have free services available for teachers. These can be particularly helpful to those teachers who may not fall under the curriculum's tested content areas.

10. COLLABORATE WITH NEIGHBORING DISTRICTS/SCHOOLS.

Pool financial and human resources with adjoining districts or schools to organize professional development consistent with the first five suggestions above.

11. USE THE INTERNET.

Encourage teacher learning teams to make extensive use of the many free and low-cost Internet resources, including online teacher networks or communities, to develop the skills to address student learning needs more effectively.

Ensuring effective professional development at any time requires focus, discipline, and difficult choices. Lean times provide an opportunity to break out of unproductive patterns of professional development decision making and target professional learning for maximum effect.

12. INVEST TIME IN READING.

Read everything in the "must-read" file. Organize voluntary journal and book study groups. Use these structures to inform staff of current research and have the opportunity to discuss the application of new ideas to their schools.

13. ESTABLISH VISITS TO SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS AND SYSTEMS.

Within every school, there are teachers who are getting better results than other teachers on their grade level or subject area. Spend time investigating the secrets to their success and determine what is transportable to other classes. Find schools that are getting better results than you with similar groups of students. Design a protocol to guide teachers in visiting a successful school; help them determine the transferable practices that might bring similar results to your school. Similarly, there are systems getting better results than your system. Arrange a similar field trip to see what practices you might import to your school system to achieve better results.

Ensuring effective professional development at any time requires focus, discipline, and difficult choices. Lean times provide an opportunity to break out of unproductive patterns of professional development decision making and target professional learning for maximum effect.

While most of these activities may require some investment of funds, they do not require the level of funding we have invested in professional development for countless programs over the last several years, and they will prove to be of greater value in many senses of that word. Any learning initiative is more likely to produce a return on investment when it begins with a focus on students. I believe the results will make the investment worthwhile and position us in a better place in the very near future. ■

SMALLER BUDGETS CALL FOR BIGGER THINKING

Katelyn is a first-year educator. She is working with 2nd graders, and her school has provided her with a mentor. Throughout the year, Katelyn and her mentor have worked through the challenges she faces in her classroom, in communicating with parents, and with organizing everything she is expected to do. At the most recent staff meeting, the principal shared with the staff that the declining economy is affecting federal and state revenues. Because much of the school's professional development is funded this way, Katelyn and her mentor wonder how school-based professional development can be effective with limited funds for stipends, substitutes, resources, and conferences. As we find ourselves in similar situations, how can we continue to provide adult learning that leads to improved student learning?

"Staff development that improves the learning of all students requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration" (Roy & Hord, 2003, p. 69). The Resource standard guides teachers, school-level leadership, central office, superintendents, and school boards to consider a variety of sources when naming resources. Money is one of those resources, and the resource that most often comes up as a determining factor in shaping learning. As the saying goes, money isn't everything. I have a strong belief that some of the most powerful learning of my professional career has come about as a result of the conversations I have had with my mentors and coaches over the years. These conversations cost me and my district nothing, could easily happen anywhere and anytime, and were incredibly targeted toward the needs I identified in my work.

As we find our financial situations challenged, and as we see friends and neighbors lose long-held jobs, homes, and investment portfolios, perhaps it is time to simplify and focus, facilitating high-quality professional learning that is results-driven, standards-based, and job-embedded. How can we leverage the resources we have in people to help us grow as professionals?

The resource of people is one we generally forget when listing our available support. Money, time, and "stuff" come to mind, but as I look around, I know that the answers to many questions lie within the experienced voices of veteran teachers. The energy and ability to multitask on a variety of levels is within easy reach of our midcareer educators, those accustomed to juggling home, young children, jobs, and the extracurricular activities of everyone in the family, including themselves. Meanwhile, our youngest professionals, like Katelyn, know no fear when navigating constantly evolving technology. Effective leaders will guide educators into adult learning teams or pairs, moving them to share their complementary skills with each other. Imagine pairing a veteran with deep knowledge of classroom management and instructional strategies, but who is afraid to use a PowerPoint presentation in class, with a young teacher who needs what the veteran has to offer, while she can share what she uses routinely in her technical world. This is one way to create a win-win relationship in schools, helping both educators to grow and leading to improved student learning.

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

In believing that the answer is in the room, effective leaders will spend these lean years focusing on people, developing new leaders in schools, and challenging faculties to find creative ways to get where they need to go by looking for opportunities and inspirations within the building. Because Katelyn's school is looking in instead of looking out, teachers share their best practices with each other. Professional development days that traditionally included a speaker or consultant are now focused on "share fairs" within grade levels, and at the secondary levels, within departments. The learning teams' work strengthens the school, with teachers sharing their best efforts, learning from each other, and pairing this new learning with peer coaching in order to move these new skills into implementation and improved results for students.

As leaders, are we open to thinking outside the box? Do you know those teachers in your district or in your

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school who are amazing in particular areas, areas where other teachers need to build their skills? In one school I visited, teachers focus on using a wider variety of instructional strategies. They asked each teacher at the beginning of the year to note two strategies they considered strengths and two for practice and growth. The strategies were posted in the teacher mailroom, along with the names of teachers who had listed each as a strength. The areas the teachers identified for practice and growth were not posted, but the teacher and leadership teams knew them. With creative scheduling, the principal gave teachers time once every nine weeks to conference with those teachers who excelled in areas in which they wanted to improve; then they have time to observe the expert teachers using those strategies in practice. These peer observations, developed with out-of-the-box thinking around time and people as resources, have had a huge cultural impact in the school, in addition to strengthening teacher skills in areas identified for growth and improvement.

In another example of innovative problem solving, an elementary principal is creatively using time to give grade-level teachers one half-day of planning in her school every nine weeks with no substitutes needed. Each nine weeks, the school's schedule shifts. On Tuesday mornings, for example, teachers know that specials (art, music, etc.) for the week are shifting. Students still visit all of their weekly specials, but the timing is altered. Tuesday mornings, kindergarten students go to back-to-back-to-back specials while their teachers have half-day team learning and planning. On Tuesday afternoon, 1st-grade teachers have their chance. Throughout the week, each grade-level team and the special teachers all have time to work collaboratively. Though their content differs, teachers have discussions about performance-based learning and assessments that cut across their disciplines. This job-embedded professional learning, maximizing the use of time and the knowledge of teachers happens without substitute teacher funding. This is a powerful way to provide learning options without shortchanging teachers or students.

The resource of people is one we generally forget when listing our available support. Money, time, and "stuff" come to mind, but as I look around, I know that the answers to many questions lie within the experienced voices of veteran teachers.

At another high-performing elementary school, the principal determined that she needed to restructure her pullout teachers to maximize learning for all adults and students in her building. Aside from gifted teachers, who continue to practice the pullout model due to funding requirements, all others, including special education teachers, reading specialists, math specialists, coaches, and ELL teachers, have been trained in coaching and are taking their practices into the regular classrooms. These coaches work in the classrooms, where the teacher benefits from their knowledge, as do the students.

The Resource standard compels us to support job-embedded professional development, to focus on a small number of high-priority goals, to work toward continuous improvement, and to continue supporting student learning via technology.

In this same school, teachers who hope to gain a coveted summer school teaching slot must be willing to participate in the professional development that accompanies this opportunity. Each morning, teachers observe model lessons delivered by school coaches to a small group of students before the rest of the summer school students arrive on campus. Later the same day, the teachers repeat the model lessons in their classrooms while the coaches support them in practicing the new skills and strategies. The principal believes that because the summer school students are not the students for whom these teachers are held accountable during annual statewide testing, they are more willing to try new strategies, become comfortable with them in practice, and take them back to their regular classrooms during the school year. Part of the magic of this idea is that new and young teachers, hoping for expanded incomes, are almost always teaching and learning during the summer school session.

This school uses its resources of time and people to make incredible gains year after year. In the five years that this elementary school has used these two practices, teacher attrition due to local school change requests has decreased to nearly zero. Student improvement continues despite growth in numbers of English language learners and free and reduced lunch students.

The Resource standard compels us to support job-embedded professional development, to focus on a small number of high-priority goals, to work toward continuous improvement, and to continue supporting student learning via technology (Roy & Hord, 2003, pp. 70-71). Reviewing the talents of the people we have within our schools and thinking beyond traditional boundaries with regard to time and energy will continue to move us toward our goals, even when dollars are in short supply.

REFERENCE

Roy, P. & Hord, S. (2003). *Moving staff development standards into practice: Innovation Configurations, Vol. I.* Oxford, OH: NSDC. ■

LOVE AND COMPASSION CHALLENGE TAKEN-FOR-GRANTED ASSUMPTIONS

Several months ago, co-author Patricia Guerra was walking her dogs when she came upon a woman who lives nearby. Walking alone, the woman asked if she could join Guerra on her walk. As they walked, the woman explained that she had just started volunteering as a teacher assistant at the neighborhood elementary school. She was excited about no longer being a stay-at-home mom and shared experiences from her first week on the job. In the middle of a story, she suddenly stopped, became very serious, and said, "You know, when my kids attended this school a few years ago, it was a different place. The parents attended PTO meetings, volunteered in classrooms, and helped with homework. Today, some of these parents just don't care about their kids."

Having heard comments like this before, Guerra suspected the woman was not talking about the white middle-class parents who had lived in the community for years, but rather families of diverse backgrounds who had more recently moved into the neighborhood. Guerra considered challenging her neighbor's deficit thinking, but to what end? Direct confrontation would likely end in alienation. What would this accomplish? Yet ignoring the comments would send the message that Guerra agreed with her. Rather than reacting from a place of anger, switching subjects, or even walking away, Guerra listened. She asked the woman to say more so Guerra could better understand her position. As the woman spoke, she expressed concern for the welfare of the students she was serving. However, she lacked cultural knowledge to understand what she observed in the classroom. Viewing parent involvement through her lens, the woman determined certain parents at the school don't care about their kids because they do not attend PTO meetings, volunteer in the office, or work in classrooms. She judged this group of parents because they did not meet her expectations for involvement.

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After talking for about 15 minutes, the woman stopped and asked Guerra what she thought of the situation. That day, Guerra's usual 30-minute walk turned into an hour-long journey. As they walked and talked, Guerra "disturbed" the woman's thinking with questions and alternate explanations of what might be occurring at the school. The woman listened intently. Guerra did not transform the woman's deficit thinking that day, but the encounter led to several more conversations over the course of the summer. Once school started and their schedules changed, Guerra didn't see the woman again until one Saturday morning in early fall. While driving down the street, the woman saw Guerra walking her dogs and pulled over, saying, "I hope you don't mind, but I gave the principal your name. She really needs to hear what you have to say."

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

What made conversations with her neighbor so effective? The answer lies in the approach. Some assert deficit comments must be met with direct force. The story of Guerra and her neighbor illustrates there is another way. Love and compassion are powerful tools in challenging taken-for-granted assumptions.

Love in this context is not romantic. Love that is the foundation for transformative dialogue (Freire, 1970) is "rooted in recognition and acceptance ... [and] combines acknowledgement, care, responsibility, commitment, and knowledge" (hooks, 2000, p. 104). This kind of love, which demonstrates concern for another, is central to helping teachers develop cultural proficiency. What does it mean to engage in loving and compassionate conversations with teachers?

1. Assume everyone is well-intentioned and express this belief.

In other words, do not transfer the target of deficit thinking from parents and students to teachers. Just as we believe all parents care about their children and value education, we believe teachers truly want to make a difference with all children but may lack the cultural knowledge and skills to do so. Believing individuals are well-intentioned paves the way for a sustained conversation, which is necessary to change beliefs.

2. Communicate your intentions.

Just as you believe teachers are well-intentioned, remind them that you are, too. Clarify that the purpose of these conversations is to increase cultural understanding to better serve all students and families and not to produce feelings of guilt. Explain that at times they may feel uncomfortable, but it is a natural part of the process.

3. Regardless of what is said, put personal feelings aside and resist the temptation to judge teachers.

What you believe about teachers influences your interactions and behaviors. Like students and parents, teachers sense when they are being judged and act accordingly.

4. When others express deficit thinking, respond out of love and compassion rather than anger.

For example, if you have concerns about a teacher's behavior, sit down with the teacher and share your perspective rather than make accusations. Allow the teacher to address the issue. Teachers are more receptive to messages, even unpleasant ones, if they believe you respect and care about them and have their best interests in mind. Challenging in an angry, confrontational manner shows neither respect nor care and will only serve to shut down communication.

5. Even when you disagree, allow teachers to voice their assumptions and beliefs.

Respectfully listen and acknowledge their views. Do not allow others to openly attack or belittle a teacher. The point of these conversations is to surface and deconstruct deficit thinking. That will not happen without a safe environment in which all participants know that risk taking is valued and they can explore a difference of opinions without humiliation.

6. Disturb teachers' thinking with questions that challenge their assumptions and require them to consider alternate explanations.

Modeling this behavior will encourage others to use the same approach.

Although we have found that this approach, used consistently, is highly effective in transforming teacher beliefs, it is not infallible. What happens when loving and compassionate conversations do not lead to change in a teacher's thinking? Such teachers must be counseled out of the field. Teachers with deficit beliefs do serious damage to students and families and should not be allowed to work with children. But even the kind of pointed conversations it takes to remove a teacher are most effective when conducted with love and compassion. Let us give you an example from one of our graduate students who used this approach even in the most challenging circumstances.

Jason, who is Latino, was standing in a movie ticket line when the man behind him loudly stated, "This looks like a welfare line." Initially, Jason ignored the man. The man began making more pointed, blatantly racist remarks, trying to provoke a physical confrontation. Instead of reacting in anger, Jason turned to the stranger. The man continued his rant. Jason noticed the man was wearing a cap with a university logo on it. Jason asked him about it and discovered they both graduated from the same university. This did nothing to deter the man, who persisted with disparaging comments. Jason was wounded by the remarks and suspected others around him were, too, but he knew this type of thinking could not be fought with anger, which does little to change deep-seated beliefs and can escalate to violence. Instead, Jason chose to fight with love and compassion. Jason calmly attempted to disturb the man's thinking through probing questions. After several minutes they reached the ticket booth. Jason turned and thanked the man for sharing his thoughts, saying most people are not willing to be so open. Dumbfounded by this unexpected response, the stranger hung his head and turned away.

The Vietnamese Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh (2001) once wrote:

"If you think that compassion is passive, weak, or cowardly, then you don't know what real compassion or understanding is. If you think that compassionate people do not resist and challenge injustice, you are wrong. They are warriors, heroes, and heroines who have gained many victories. When you act with compassion, with nonviolence … you have to be very strong. You no longer act out of anger, you do not punish or blame. Compassion grows constantly inside of you, and you can succeed in your fight against injustice. Mahatma Gandhi was just one person. He did not have any bombs, any guns, or any political party. He acted simply on the … strength of compassion, not on the basis of anger" (p. 128).

Jason knew a simple act of love and compassion would have more power than the strongest punch and would make a lasting impact on this stranger. When working with teachers who are well-intentioned, and even those who have proven they are not, this is the source from which we need to act.

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FROM THE field

A QUICK GLIMPSE AT RECENT RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

ARTS EDUCATION HANDBOOK

"Designing the arts learning community: A handbook for K-12 professional development planners"
Los Angeles County Arts Commission, San Francisco Arts Commission, & Santa Clara County Office of Education, November 2008

Synthesizing extensive research of arts education practice across the United States, this online

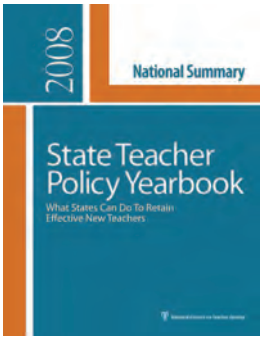
handbook is a guide to designing arts education professional development for K-12 classroom teachers and provides a database of 50 arts learning communities. The handbook emphasizes a systemic, ongoing collaborative approach and demonstrates how to establish, grow, and sustain a learning community that comes together to improve arts instruction.
http://handbook.laartsed.org/home/index.ashx

HOW THE U.S. STACKS UP

"Comparative indicators of education in the United States and other G-8 countries: 2009"
Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, March 2009

This report describes how the education system in the United States compares with other nations that are among the world's most economically developed countries: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Russian Federation, and the United Kingdom. Of particular interest for professional development is Chapter 3: Context for Learning, which addresses such topics as teacher working time, professional development in mathematics and science, and principals' use of student achievement data.
http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2009039

RETAINING NEW TEACHERS



"2008 state teacher policy yearbook: What states can do to retain effective new teachers"
National Council on Teacher Quality, January 2009

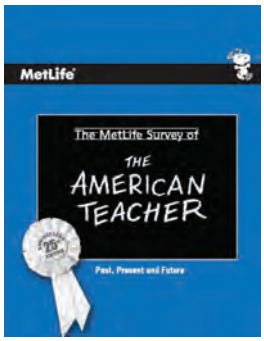
The third through fifth years of teaching represent a key period in a teacher's career. Many teachers leave during this time, just when they are becoming more consistently effective. This examination of state policies focuses on the retention of effective new teachers. The report details what each state is doing to identify teacher effectiveness, support the retention of valuable, early career teachers, and dismiss those found to be ineffective.
www.nctq.org/stpy08/

STIMULUS FUNDS FOR EDUCATION

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009
U.S. Department of Education

Visit this web page for the latest updates on stimulus funds dedicated to education. Resources include fact sheets and guidance for grant programs as well as updates on disbursement of funds to states.
www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/

METLIFE SURVEY RESULTS



"MetLife survey of the American teacher: Past, present, and future"
MetLife Foundation, October 2008

Conducted by Harris Interactive, this 25th edition of the MetLife survey includes the views of teachers, principals, and students and looks back to the earliest MetLife surveys to examine how perspectives on teachers, teaching, and public education have changed. Similar to past surveys, this recent report documents current attitudes, examines trends, and considers future implications by addressing teacher satisfaction with careers; academic standards and curriculum; student success; professional relationships and communication; school conditions; parent and community relations; and challenges beyond the classroom.
www.metlife.com/assets/cao/contributions/citizenship/teacher-survey-25th-anniv-2008.pdf

The MetLife Foundation sponsored the May issues of NSDC's newsletters, all freely available online to members and the general public.

WORLD VIEW

"Short sighted: How America's lack of attention to international education studies impedes improvement"
Alliance for Excellent Education, March 2009

According to this policy brief, the U.S. is missing valuable opportunities to learn from the policies and practices of other nations by participating in international education studies at minimal levels. The brief describes the importance of full involvement in international comparative analyses and concludes with several recommendations for policy makers and education leaders.
www.all4ed.org/files/shortsighted.pdf

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

"From isolation to collaboration: Promoting teacher leadership through PLCs"
Center for Teaching Quality, October 2008

Through an online networking initiative led by about 100 teacher leaders and sponsored by the Wachovia Foundation, the Center for Teaching Quality crafted this report of policies and practices for increasing teacher leadership through professional learning communities. In addition to recommending policies that support such communities, the report outlines effective strategies for establishing learning communities. The report is enhanced by links to podcasts from the practitioners involved about their experiences.
www.teachingquality.org/publications/

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

"Learning teams: Creating what's next"
National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, April 2009

According to this report, the nation stands to lose half of its teachers to retirement over the next decade. To avoid a potential school staffing crisis, the report recommends the creation of cross-generational learning teams, in which experienced veterans stay in teaching longer by working with new teachers, providing mentoring, coaching, and instructional assistance that will help to improve student performance and reduce attrition rates for new teachers.
www.nctaf.org/resources/research_and_reports/nctaf_research_reports/index.htm

MARYLAND'S LEARNING ROAD MAP

"Maryland teacher professional development planning and evaluation guide"
Harford County (Md.) Public Schools, October 2008

Researcher M. Bruce Haslam created this guide to help staff in school district central offices, schools, the Maryland State Department of Education, and other professional development providers work together to plan, conduct, and report on evaluations of teacher professional development. The guide was designed for use with the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Planning Guide, also available on the same web site.
snipurl.com/gdl0z

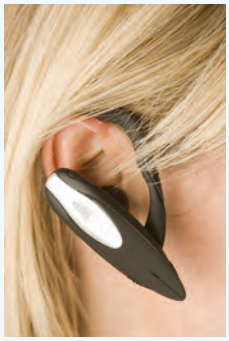
theme / TRANSFORMING TEACHING

Who's that teacher? *Matrix shows how to support teachers at different levels.*

The notion of differentiated support applies to teachers as well as to students, since individual teachers demonstrate mastery in different areas of expertise. This framework outlines considerations for how school leaders can best support teachers with strengths and weaknesses in content and student knowledge.
By Gary Waddell

Medical residency model goes to school.

Teams of teachers and principals from a district outside of Seattle, Wash., visited studio classrooms to engage in meaningful, on-the-job learning. The learning laboratory environment allowed teams to observe other teachers, discuss lessons in detail, and collectively reflect on what works and what doesn't before taking practices back to their own classrooms.
By Beth Boatright and Chrysan Gallucci with Judy Swanson, Michelle van Lare, and Irene Yoon



See me, hear me, coach me. *Virtual bug-in-ear technology brings immediacy to professional development.*

Teachers in Alabama and Pennsylvania participate in on-the-spot coaching, thanks to the wise use of technology tools, including wireless headsets, webcams, and Skype. The virtual presence of the coach in the classroom during lessons encourages just-in-time adjustments to instruction and immediate feedback and support.
By Marcia L. Rock, Madeleine Gregg, Pamela W. Howard, Donna M. Ploessl, Sharron Maughn, Robert A. Gable, and Naomi P. Zigmond

A work in progress: *Formative assessments shape teaching and provide mutual professional development.*

Teachers in Buffalo Grove, Ill., and Barrington, R.I., collect evidence before, during, and after instruction to stay on top of which students need help and which students are making progress as intended. The collaborative analysis of the assessment data assists all teachers in building their content knowledge and pedagogical skills.
By Julia Steiny

Collaboration takes center stage: *Interactive teaching through a schoolwide focus on the performing arts leads to dramatic improvements in learning.*

An elementary school in Petaluma, Calif., took a journey from good to great teaching with a focus on integrating performing arts partnered with a sophisticated examination of student learning. Collaborations among expert teachers and grade-level teams led to increased student engagement and a commitment to an open, reflective school culture.
By Jeff Williamson and Diane Zimmerman

features

Spotlight on special education.

Special education is one of many issues demanding school and system leaders' attention. Find 10 critical readings for administrators, annotated by educators immersed in the subject. The articles cover autism, legal issues, inclusion, Response to Intervention, and professional learning.

By Belinda Dunnick Karge and Beth Lasky

State of the profession revisited: *Global statistics bring fresh thinking to inquiry into professional development.*

NSDC's recently released report, *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession,* inspired one noted researcher to continue the dialog about how to extend knowledge about what works in professional development. The use of comparative education data from around the world provides an opportunity to examine practices and contexts in the United States.

By Bruce R. Joyce

coming up

In Fall 2009 *JSD*:
Learning schools

forum / PARKER McMULLEN

SHARED PERSPECTIVES LEAD TO BETTER VISION FOR EVERYONE

I bought my first telescope when I was 12 years old. It was a 90 mm Swift refractor with two eyepieces and a Barlow lens. The Barlow lens doubled the magnification of the two eyepieces. On a cold, clear February night in the early '60s, I slowly increased the magnification until I could see the polar ice cap on Mars. This was the absolute limit of my little scope's capabilities and a stunning moment for me.

My moment of discovery illustrates the fundamental conflict between width of view and resolution. Without my telescope, I could observe the broad panorama of the heavens all the way down to the horizon. I could see the Milky Way spread across the sky. Through my telescope, I had only a narrow view. That narrow view allowed me much greater resolution of the distant objects on which I trained my little Swift. From my backyard, Mars was a reddish bright star. Through my telescope, I could see details unavailable to the naked eye.


Parker McMullen

This is a matter of altitude. At great altitude, you have a breadth of view that is incomprehensible to someone closer to the ground. However, the person closer to the ground can see much more detail in the landscape.

The difference in perspective between central offices and classrooms arises from the same conundrum. You have either the wide view that takes in everything yet lacks resolution, or your field of view is very narrow and you have great focus on the details. In some of the districts where I've worked, folks in the central office and in the classroom say the same thing: "They just don't understand!" And I realize that both of them are right.

People working in central offices have a broad view, whatever their job title. Whether they work in grant management or curriculum, they have a view that extends outward into the universe of possibilities in their field. They are generally concerned with events and discoveries that lie outside of the school, yet that will benefit the school. They seek resources such as grants and innovations that will improve the district's performance. Because they are not located within the schools, they are less likely to see the finer details of the classroom.

On the other hand, the classroom teacher has a view that looks inward into the universe of possibilities that exists in their students. They are focused on the details of student learning. They have a finely drawn view of student abilities, needs, and potential. The closeness of their work and their attention to detail creates a barrier that prevents them from seeing the bigger picture of state and federal mandates and the responsibilities that accompany them. They rarely have the opportunity to look outward.

When these views are held independently, a corrosive force is at work. This polarity is toxic over time and can lead districts and schools into paralysis. Educators in both camps end up frustrated at their inability to make their views understood. One view is broad and all-encompassing, focused on big external issues. The other view is high-resolution and focused on individual children.

What can we do?

What would happen if the folks with the broad view and the folks with the high-resolution view managed to come together and discuss with each other their differences and similarities? Most likely, those who are closely focused on individual children would gain insight into external resources that could help them in their tasks. At the same time, central office staff would gain understanding of teachers' needs and would be able to select resources most beneficial to the schools. While teachers may know their students better than anyone else, the classroom does not operate in a vacuum. Developing the best solutions for all students requires that we develop a shared view that considers the ramifications created by the broader world outside of the classroom and understands student needs to discover and develop what will best promote learning. This can only happen when we all share our unique views of the issues that confront us.

The collaborative approach is already successful in many schools and districts. Only by working together can we understand and address the educational challenges we face. We must access all of the perspectives at hand to increase the ways in which we collaborate for the benefit of all teachers and students. ■

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