

## theme / LEARNING SCHOOLS

**A new definition.**

Originally created for federal legislation, NSDC's definition of professional learning outlines effective learning for educators. Key elements of the definition cover the use of data in a continuous cycle of improvement, teams of educators working together, and the connection between adult learning and student learning.

*By Stephanie Hirsh*

**Strength training:** *Institutes pump up teachers' roles as instructional leaders.*

When a Massachusetts district determined that instructional improvement was a priority, it turned to an external partner to boost leadership capacity in the district. Summer institutes were just the first step in building a long-term, collaborative learning culture that relied on strong teacher leadership and resulted in improved student outcomes.

*By Peg Mongiello, Deborah Brady, George Johnson, and Jill Harrison Berg*

**Focus, feedback, follow-through:** *Professional development basics guide district's plan.*

Coaches are a critical piece in implementing what is now districtwide practice in Surprise, Ariz. — supporting teachers through differentiated, job-embedded professional learning and using specific feedback as the vehicle to impact classroom instruction. Protocols for sharing feedback and collecting classroom data guide the learning conversations.

*By Lori Renfro and Adriel Grieshaber*

**Fast track to literacy:** *Kentucky district targets struggling readers in urban schools.*

After determining the student outcomes they desired for high school students falling behind in language arts, educators identified a particular instructional program and accompanying professional development. To measure the effectiveness of the program, they employed a five-level evaluation model using a combination of qualitative and quantitative evidence.

*By Thomas R. Guskey, Marco A. Muñoz, and Jennifer Aberli*

**Think time:** *Formative assessment empowers teachers to try new practices.*

Students take on new responsibilities for their learning and the learning of their peers in this Vermont school, thanks to the use of formative assessments. At the same time, the role of the teacher shifts. An external partner assisted educators in implementing the use of formative assessments, while teacher communities provide ongoing support and learning.

*By Teresa M. Egan, Beth Cobb, and Marion Anastasia*

**Slow turn ahead:** *5 principles guide district through a changing demographic landscape.*

A midsized Texas district worked to boost student performance through transformed professional learning practices. Central to the transformation was the alignment of professional development with the district's improvement initiatives. Time for learning, enlisting all leaders, team collaboration, engaging everyone in the work, and using data for decision making are the guiding principles.

*By Margaret N. Miller, Ellen V. Bell, and David F. Holland*

**Skeptics to partners:** *University teams with district to improve ELL instruction.*

Faculty from a nearby university worked with elementary schools in North Carolina to implement the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol, a professional learning model to assist teachers in best supporting English language learners. Summer institutes, school-based learning communities, and coaching sustained the learning throughout the year.

*By Debra O'Neal, Marjorie C. Ringler, and Diana B. Lys*

## feature

**Let data do the talking:** *Assessment is an everyday activity for high-achieving Long Beach. Q&A with Chris Steinhauser.*

The superintendent of Long Beach (Calif.) Unified School District sees professional development as central to the success of the district. He also takes a scientific approach to improvement, immersing all levels of staff in the use of data to track progress, determine next steps, and document successes and failures.

*By Tracy Crow*

