

editor's note/

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FUNDAMENTALLY SOUND IDEAS BEAR REPEATING

Recently in *JSD*, we've covered a number of what I would call fundamental topics. In the fall, we talked about NSDC's definition of professional development, outlining expectations for effective professional learning and showing examples of what that looks like in schools and districts. Last winter, our topic was what works in professional learning. In fact, every issue we produce stresses an aspect of professional learning that we find essential.

In this issue, we're back to basics again. What's different about this? In some ways, not much. What we know to be effective about professional learning always comes back to the foundations. You see these foundations in NSDC's Standards for Staff Development, in the beliefs, in the definition, in our purpose. These basics are the very air we breathe:

Put kids at the center. Learn every day. Demand results. Plan carefully. Attend to relationships. Develop strong leaders. Work in teams. Look at data. Assess your impact. Reflect often.

That's certainly not a comprehensive list, but I'll add one that's not usually in our vocabulary: *Check your assumptions*. This basic underlies a lot of what I have learned from the writers in this and previous issues. In one sense, *check your assumptions* is the flip side of looking at data. We need evidence to know what challenges to address, to plan learning, and to assess impact.

Check your assumptions also indicates we need to be careful about what we suspect educators already understand or the skills they have. For example, there is a big assumption at work in schools that implement professional learning communities without attending to collaboration skills: *Teachers know how to collaborate*. Or in faculty meetings filled with assessment reports without investigating how to analyze and interpret data: *Teachers know what the data mean*. Or in districts that send educators to the hottest workshop of the year without a common purpose: *All educators benefit from the same learning option*.

In checking my assumptions, I need to be careful about what we cover in *JSD*. I can't assume that all readers share the same grounding in the basics. As an organization, we can't assume that our beliefs and purpose are universally shared just because we hold them so dearly.

The central message of the book *Change or Die* (Deutschman, 2007) sticks with me as I think about what it takes to change behavior. The authors posit that three keys can lead to lasting change: Relate (form hope through relationships), reframe (see information in new ways), and repeat (develop skills through practice). My hope is that *JSD* gives you tools to relate, reframe, and repeat when you need it most. We'll always need to restate the basics and reframe our messages, even as we advance our understanding of what is fundamental.

REFERENCE

Deutschman, A. (2007). *Change or die: The three keys to change at work and in life*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers. ■

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

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