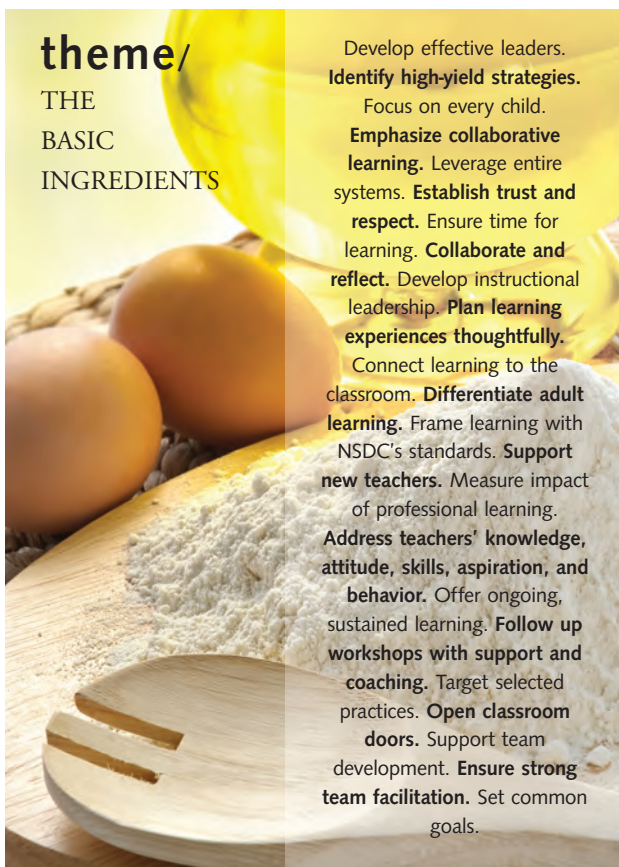


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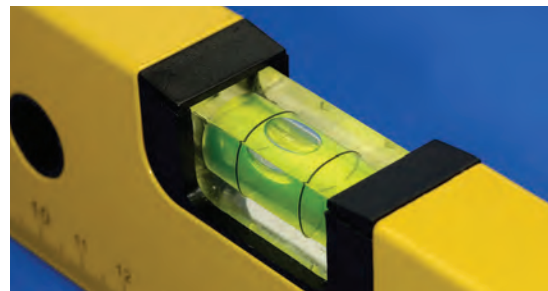
THE BASIC INGREDIENTS



Develop effective leaders. **Identify high-yield strategies.** Focus on every child. **Emphasize collaborative learning.** Leverage entire systems. **Establish trust and respect.** Ensure time for learning. **Collaborate and reflect.** Develop instructional leadership. **Plan learning experiences thoughtfully.** Connect learning to the classroom. **Differentiate adult learning.** Frame learning with NSDC's standards. **Support new teachers.** Measure impact of professional learning. **Address teachers' knowledge, attitude, skills, aspiration, and behavior.** Offer ongoing, sustained learning. **Follow up workshops with support and coaching.** Target selected practices. **Open classroom doors.** Support team development. **Ensure strong team facilitation.** Set common goals.

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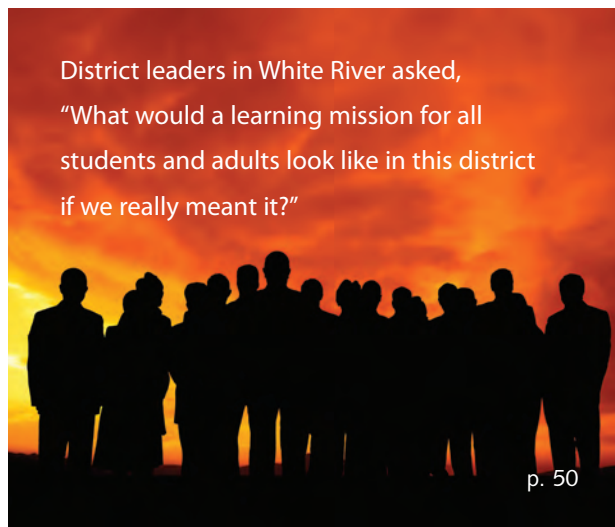
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HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

JSD is published six 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 non-members of NSDC are welcome.

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editor's note/

TRACY CROW

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

New series provides interactive learning with colleagues

This fall, NSDC's online learning offerings took a great leap forward with the first professional development program in the 2009-10 E-Learning Series. The program, facilitated by NSDC Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh, was the first of six that NSDC will offer during the current school year.

Each five-week program in NSDC's E-Learning Series offers participants an opportunity to share their knowledge and expertise with program facilitators and colleagues from across the country and around the world. Programs are conducted in the NSDC Learning Exchange, an innovative e-learning platform that includes live weekly presentations, a resource library, live chats and asynchronous discussion forums, and the opportunity to work collaboratively with colleagues on group activities.

NSDC's e-learning programs provide educators with a unique opportunity to not only learn from experts in the field of professional learning, but to collaborate with their colleagues in ways that increase the collective learning of all program participants.

"We want our e-learning programs to reflect the belief that school's most complex problems are solved by educators collaborating and working together," said Tom Manning, NSDC's associate director of member experience.

NSDC'S E-LEARNING LINEUP

- **Raising achievement through school improvement planning** (begins Jan. 11, 2010)
- **Data tools that support sustained improvement** (begins Feb. 22, 2010)
- **Assessing the impact of professional development** (begins April 5, 2010)
- **Professional learning that changes classroom practice** (begins May 17, 2010)



NSDC's e-learning programs are \$199 for NSDC members and \$249 for nonmembers. To discover more about the e-learning series, go to www.nsd.org/elearning/programs

"Our programs are not passive learning experiences. Everyone who participates contributes to the conversation. Whether you're relaying your own experiences during a live session, or participating in group activities, or posting your ideas in a community forum, each program participant is expanding the knowledge base of everyone in the program. Everyone is truly learning both with and from one another."

NEW TRUSTEES ELECTED

NSDC members selected Amanda Rivera and Kenneth Salim to join the Board of Trustees. Their terms begin at the end of the 2009 Annual Conference.

Rivera is a principal in Chicago Public Schools and has also worked in the district as director of professional development. She has been an NSDC member for seven years. She has presented at NSDC's Annual Conference, participated in NSDC's Big 35 network, and sponsored an Innovation

Configuration training for district partners. Rivera has served in national, state, and district committees on teacher evaluation, mentoring, professional learning



Rivera

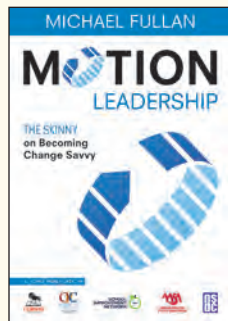


Salim

communities, and National Board Certification.

Kenneth Salim, a four-year NSDC member, is director of teacher development for Boston Public Schools. He is a member of the NSDC Academy Class of 2009, a founding member of the New England NSDC affiliate, and has presented at NSDC's Annual Conference.

He is a doctoral candidate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where he researches the experiences of teacher leaders.



Change is focus of book club selection

NSDC members who have added the NSDC Book Club to their membership package will receive *Motion Leadership: The Skinny on Becoming Change Savvy* by Michael Fullan. The noted leading thinker in change theory offers insights on how to move individuals, institutions, and entire systems forward.

This book includes examples from Fullan's experience to help readers understand and work with change, mobilize peers to collaborate, and promote learning as the work of individuals and organizations.

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 *Motion Leadership*, you must add the NSDC Book Club to your membership before Dec. 15. The book will be mailed to NSDC Book Club members in February. For more information about this or any membership package, call NSDC at 800-727-7288 or e-mail NSDCoffice@nsdc.org.

Read the Q&A with Michael Fullan on p. 12 to learn more about the ideas in this book.

FUNDAMENTALS CREATE A CONTEXT FOR LEARNING

As NSDC president, I am very pleased that this issue of *JSD* focuses on the fundamentals of professional learning. No individual or team realizes its full potential without a grounding in the fundamentals of its craft and a regular reinforcement of those fundamentals. In the rush to get our work done, it's very easy to skip over steps we know are important or to design work for others without testing the plan against those practices we know increase the likelihood of effective learning and improved practice.

For me, one of the fundamentals too often neglected is the importance of setting the context for professional learning. The outcome of a professional learning experience is affected before the learners ever engage in learning activities. Thoughtfully addressing some very basic questions up front can create a much more positive context.

Here are three questions related to context that I find important.

- **What is the rationale for a particular learning experience, and how will it be communicated in advance?**

Just telling people when and where to show up rarely creates an atmosphere that nurtures positive expectations. Assuming there is a clear and compelling rationale for the learning opportunity, learners should understand that rationale and be informed of it by the most effective messenger well in advance. Sometimes the learners themselves set the goals. In that case, this step is a matter of team members articulating clear objectives for themselves. When learning goals are set by the school or system, this step requires much more thought. The rationale must be supported by data and communicated by someone with the credibility and authority to make the case that the learning is important and worthwhile.

- **What else is going on in the learners' world that needs to be taken into consideration?**

Educators are very busy people. When we ignore the totality of their daily work, we can create barriers to learning that are hard to overcome. Part of setting the context for learning is finding a time that optimizes the attention and commitment of the learners. Being mindful of the time of the grading period, special events that may be going on at the school, and other learning experiences in which participants are engaged are all important pieces of context that the wise planner identifies and considers.

- **What can be done before the first group learning experience to create readiness and focus?**

Every good teacher knows that getting students' minds on the learning at hand is job one. It's no different for adults. We can do that in advance by asking learners to engage in thought that sets the stage for learning. We might ask them to think about three questions and be ready to share their responses or ask them to read an article and let them know there will be an opportunity to share their reactions. The keys are for the activity to relate to the content and to be used early in the learning experience.

In this issue of *JSD*, we have the opportunity to learn about or be reminded of other fundamentals in designing and providing effective professional learning. I encourage you to integrate these ideas about creating a positive learning context into your own command of the basics. ■



Charles Mason is president of the National Staff Development Council.

IMPACTING THE FUTURE NOW — WHY I GIVE

Shirley Hord, NSDC scholar laureate and member of the Impacting the Future Now Board, has shaped the thinking and practices of NSDC members and friends through her passion and her research. She joined the board of NSDC's foundation to further her commitment to continuous professional learning that results in high student achievement. Here she shares why she donates to the foundation:

I give to Impacting the Future Now because it is a pathway to what I believe is imperative — continuous professional learning of our educators. My rationale for giving goes something like this:

1. Most people agree that the basic reason that we have schools is for student learning.
2. In schools, the most significant factor that influences whether students learn well is quality teaching. There are big questions

around what to teach students, when to teach it, and how to teach it, but the major variable is quality teaching. I don't say quality teacher — there are many at the campus and in the district who contribute to the teaching that occurs.

3. When we ask how to expand quality teaching, the response is continuous professional learning. The major reason I contribute to Impacting the Future Now is to support teachers, principals, and school

teams in assessing adult learning needs, planning for providing that learning for the adults, and monitoring its progress.

The point is to provide continuous learning for educators so that their effectiveness is continuously enhanced and students consistently learn successfully. Impacting the Future Now contributes to this agenda through making grants that support the continuous professional learning of our professional educators.



JSD CALL FOR ARTICLES

- *August 2010*
Social justice
Manuscript deadline:
Jan. 15, 2010
- *October 2010*
Policies that support professional learning
Manuscript deadline:
Feb. 15, 2010
- *December 2010*
Content-specific professional development
Manuscript deadline:
April 15, 2010
- *February 2011*
Working with external partners
Manuscript deadline:
June 15, 2010

Read more about each of the themes at www.nsd.org/news/jsd/themes.cfm.

Send inquiries or manuscripts to Tracy Crow (tracy.crow@nsdc.org).

NSDC CALENDAR

Feb. 1: Deadline for submitting proposals to present at NSDC's 42nd Annual Conference in Atlanta, Ga., in December 2010.

Feb. 15: Deadline to apply to the NSDC Academy Class of 2012. www.nsd.org/opportunities/academy.cfm

Feb. 15: Deadline for applying for Impacting the Future Now scholarships and grants. www.nsd.org/getinvolved/foundation.cfm

April 1: Deadline for NSDC Awards nominations. www.nsd.org/getinvolved/awards.cfm

July 18-21: Attend NSDC's Summer Conference for Teacher Leaders and the Administrators Who Support Them, Seattle, Wash.

NSDC AWARDS 2009

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CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD

Thomas Guskey, Lexington, Ky.
Shirley Hord, Boerne, Texas



Make a nomination for NSDC Awards 2010.

Learn more at

www.nsdc.org/getinvolved/awards.cfm

BEST RESEARCH

"Improving Teachers' Assessment Practices Through Professional Development: The Case of National Board Certification"
American Educational Research Journal, Vol. 45, No. 3, 669-700 (2008)

Mistilina Sato (from left), University of Minnesota
Ruth Chung Wei, Stanford University
Linda Darling-Hammond, Stanford University



SUSAN LOUCKS-HORSLEY AWARD

Page Keeley,
Maine
Mathematics
and Science
Alliance,
Augusta,
Maine



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Marti
Richardson,
Knoxville,
Tenn.



SHIRLEY HAVENS SUPPORT & CLASSIFIED STAFF DEVELOPMENT AWARD

DeKalb
County
School
System,
Decatur,
Ga.



STAFF DEVELOPMENT BOOK OF THE YEAR

Change Wars
by Andy Hargreaves, left, and
Michael Fullan (Editors)
Solution Tree, 2008



Q&A with Michael Fullan

BY TRACY CROW



PROOF POSITIVE

The keys to successful school change are in our grasp

BY TRACY CROW

JSD: You've been a leading voice in the field of educational change for decades. What do you consider fundamental to successful change?

Fullan: The reason I can answer this so clearly is that we're now going from practice to theory rather than the other way around. The theory is well grounded. The fundamen-

tals of professional learning and change must first include two ideas. One is that everybody is engaged — we call it whole-system reform. It's all the schools in the district, all the classrooms in the schools, and all the districts in the province or the state. In terms of engagement, professional learning has to include everybody; otherwise, you only get piecemeal

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change. The other fundamental concern is the substance of the learning — to make sure that the focus is on each and every child. These days it's called personalization; it used to be called differentiated instruction. You're identifying the needs of individual children and then responding early to those needs with targeted engagement and structural improvement. That is the essence of it: Everybody is engaged in trying to solve the problem of learning for all students using

personalization and strategies that really pinpoint the needs and then mobilize the learning necessary to meet those needs, to get the results.

JSD: What are the steps to get to that point?

Fullan: Let me get more detailed on establishing the fundamentals. No. 1: Focus on a small number of goals. No. 2: Generate not only a belief but a reality that all kids can learn. No. 3: Focus on specific instructional strategies that will get at the individual needs of all students, and be sure that those specific strategies are tied in to assessment for learning. No. 4: The group is mobilizing to do the work and to learn from each other. This would be the principal and a literacy coach and teacher leadership team or school improvement team, extended to the rest of the staff. No. 5: The principal's role is to mobilize that group. And then the new extension is making sure the school is in a network of schools where the schools are learning from each other.

TAKING CHANGE SYSTEMWIDE

When we take this a step further, to really reach the system, we see a couple of other concepts that stand out in terms of what is fundamental. One is collective capacity. It is crucial



**INGREDIENTS
for professional
learning
highlighted
in this article:**

- Develop effective leaders.
- Identify high-yield strategies.
- Focus on every child.
- Emphasize collaborative learning.
- Leverage entire systems.

that we underscore the collective part of capacity, because it's the group, it's the whole school, it's the network of schools, it's the whole district, it's the whole state. The other, new concept that's coming out of this is an intriguing one, one we call collaborative competition. We've seen it in several districts now, where you actually see people trying to outdo each other, not in a mean way, but as a moral imperative, in a within-the-family way.

They're thinking, "This is important we get it right, and I can do better than you, and I can do better than myself."

Here's an analogy: Recently, Tiger Woods gave Sean O'Hair a tip about putting. Sean O'Hair is in the top five, so he's a close competitor of Tiger Woods, and they were in a win-lose situation. Why would Tiger do that? Not so much because he's a nice guy, but because people who are really good like other people to be good, too, and they want to compete against whoever's best. This is definitely a phenomenon we're seeing, and it's such a win, because instead of getting charter schools competing with other schools, where it's all about win-lose, this situation is win-win because successful schools are leveraging each other and they're getting more results for the overall purpose. Because finally, in all of these cases of successful change, there is a focus on the bottom line of results.

JSD: Would you talk about what you mean by motion leadership? You have a new book out by that title.

Fullan: Yes, and the subtitle on that is important – *Motion Leadership: The Skinny on Becoming Change Savvy* (Corwin Press, 2010).

ABOUT MICHAEL FULLAN

Michael Fullan is an internationally recognized expert in educational change. A prolific writer and speaker, Fullan has worked in schools and educational systems around the world, including his home province of Ontario, Canada. He partners with a variety of projects designed to engineer school improvement and is engaged in training, consulting, and evaluation of change projects. He is currently special policy adviser in education to the premier of Ontario.

Fullan's most recent books include:

- *All Systems Go: The Change Imperative for Whole System Reform*, Corwin Press, 2010.
- *Motion Leadership: The Skinny on Becoming Change Savvy*, Corwin Press, 2010.

- *Realization: The Change Imperative for Deepening District-Wide Reform* (with Lyn Sharratt), Corwin Press, 2009.
- *The Six Secrets of Change: What the Best Leaders Do to Help Their Organizations Survive and Thrive*, Jossey-Bass, 2008.
- *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, 4th Edition, Teachers College Press, 2007.
- *Turnaround Leadership*, Jossey-Bass, 2006.

He also writes frequent articles in publications worldwide. For a complete listing of articles and books, visit his web site at www.michaelfullan.ca.

(See NSDC Book Club selection on p. 7.) First of all, motion leadership is the kind of leadership that creates movement, positive movement. We're looking at going from a situation that's not so good to one that's much better or great. Then the "skinny on change" is identifying the smallest number of key factors that you need to focus on, factors that are high-powered, in the sense that if you do them together, you'll see lots of results for the effort. So, for example, make sure you work on fundamental goals, make sure you mobilize the group to work together — whether you call it professional learning community or collaborative culture doesn't matter. Make sure you link what you're doing to actual results, and that the data are transparent, and that you use the assessment data to improve instruction. In that book, we have "captured

ing, and in 12 months, with a new leader and using these ideas, they've moved up in literacy — reading, writing, and math — at grades 3 and 6, which are our measurement points in Ontario by the assessment agency. They've moved up from about 50% success to 75% across a very large elementary school. So that's the "skinny of change" in action, when a school can turn around that quickly and the teachers in the school say at the end of it, "We did it. We didn't think it was possible, but we did it." These teachers will never go back to the old way of doing things.

JSD: What was in place at the beginning of that 12-month period that put this school on that track?

Fullan: What kick-started it was a new, instructionally oriented principal, with lots of support from the dis-

trict. It couldn't be done without those two things. And the goal of the "skinny of change" is to excite people who are there to collaborate to do something different that they find satisfying and energizing. The driver has to be the principal and has to be in a district that has its act together in terms of resources and focus and support, but also pressure. The principal has to establish positive relationships with the staff by helping them achieve real success. The principal has to create ownership as quickly as possible by helping them experience changes that get students and staff engaged in learning in a way that they have never been before. They see the results within a year. Only instructionally grounded principals who are also good at relationship building can do this in short order.

This school is not isolated. We

JSD: Going beyond the school now, how do you build that collective capacity that is so important?

Fullan: I write about this in another recent book, *All Systems Go* (Corwin Press, 2010). In terms of systems, I mean the whole country, the educational system, or a whole state or province. Looking at these whole systems, I critique some of the strategies that are used at these bigger system levels. For example, take Arne Duncan's four pillars: 1) We've got to have common high standards, which we don't have now; 2) we have to invest in the quality of teachers and principals; 3) we have to have a strong database; and 4) we have to focus on the bottom 5,000 schools. None of those strategies touch collective capacity. Yes, high standards are great. They're necessary, but they're not sufficient. There's no capacity-building strategy if you just build the standards. If you add the data, which is the second of his pillars, great data systems, that's still not developing capacity. If you add the excellent teachers and excellent principals, that's what I call an individualistic strategy, not a collective strategy. It sounds good, but it's just producing individuals, it's not working on the collective. And then the fourth pillar, which is to turn around the bottom 5,000 schools. The issue is not to turn around 5,000 out of 100,000 schools, you've got to turn around their contexts, their districts. You've got to turn

The skinny boils down change to the smallest number of high-yield things you need to do to get substantial results.

the skinny" by looking at examples of this in action and drawing out the lessons. The skinny boils down change to the smallest number of high-yield things you need to do to get substantial results.

SKINNY CHANGE=FASTER CHANGE

The other concept that's part of the "skinny" is what I call the speed of quality change. With these strategies now, we are seeing substantial quality change within 12 months in a school. It's no longer going to take five years. At the same time, it is not going to be overnight, but positive results can be obtained in a very short time. We've featured schools — for example, Armadale Public School, which is one of the schools in York Region in Ontario — that have achieved remarkable change rapidly. Armadale has 900 students, 80% Tamil speak-

ing, and in 12 months, with a new leader and using these ideas, they've moved up in literacy — reading, writing, and math — at grades 3 and 6, which are our measurement points in Ontario by the assessment agency. They've moved up from about 50% success to 75% across a very large elementary school. So that's the "skinny of change" in action, when a school can turn around that quickly and the teachers in the school say at the end of it, "We did it. We didn't think it was possible, but we did it." These teachers will never go back to the old way of doing things.

This school is not isolated. We

around the whole system. Overall, there's currently a strong limiting bias in favor of strategies that don't get to capacity much at all and certainly don't get to collective capacity.

With collective capacity, the group in combination is working on something and solving the problem together. We've learned this in the professional learning community's research and development that the DuFours and Eaker have carried out. Usually that has been just professional learning communities at a school. If I start adding collective capacity beyond that, it's the capacity of the district to partner with the schools to get things done.

THE POWER OF THE COLLECTIVE

When you look at what causes a student to learn well, it's not that somehow they had a great teacher along the way; an individual great teacher can do a lot of good, possibly turn around the future of a child. But really, if you look at a child going through grades K-12, it's those 13 years and the combination of teachers that are making the difference. That combination is collective.

In all of the solutions that we see

in *Motion Leadership* and the schools and districts in *All Systems Go*, the group got together and said, "We are going to not only have common standards, we're going to have common assessments, and we're all going to understand them." If we've got a collective approach in a school, and I'm a 3rd-grade teacher, the students that I get next year come from grade 2 in a way that they're way more prepared and consistent with what I'm doing, because we've had collaboration within the school to know what we're doing in a common way. These students have learned some of the basic instructional strategies of cooperative learning and strategies that work in reading and math. So what teachers inherit each year in that school are students who are better prepared because of what the students did the year before.

When we see this capacity in the district, the same thing applies. If a person is an assistant principal in one school and gets promoted to principal in another school in the district, they find commonality there, if the district has been working on collective capacity. What you get out of the collective are two big things. One, the best ideas

are coordinated and therefore more focused and coherent, vertically and horizontally. And then secondly, you see what we call a greater "we-we commitment." A teacher in a collaborative school will stop thinking about "my children" only and start thinking about "our children" in the school. A principal in a given school will stop thinking just about "my school" in isolation and will think about the success of other schools as a collectivity. We have 72 districts in Ontario, and this is how the directors and the superintendents think as well. They think, "I am a district, I'm one of 72, but I'm also part of trying to improve the entire public system of Ontario. If the entire public system improves, that's a goal that I can share in." You've got this double whammy of positive forces, the ideas are more accessible and used, and the sense of bigger commitment is greater, and therefore you're more motivated to do something. Because the ideas are there, you're able to do it better.

In *All Systems Go*, I show how we've used these strategies in Ontario and how 4,000 elementary schools have improved their literacy and numeracy on the average over the last

five years, quite significantly. Nine hundred high schools have gone from 68% in high school graduation to 77%, and the rate is still moving up every year. These are very impressive collective results, and it's because we've been using these whole-system concepts.

When you cause the collectivity to change the way I've described it, you have a collaborative, cultural change, not just at schools but of the entire public system.

JSD: You sound optimistic.

Fullan: I am, I'm excited. I'm optimistic for two reasons. For one thing, we can actually describe this systemwide change now in a very pin-

are successful, like Alberta and Ontario in Canada, Finland, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea, have a much lower gap between high and low. When health economists look at the data, the findings are crystal clear: You're more likely to die younger, on the average, if you live in a society with a wider gap. It doesn't matter whether you're rich or poor, though the poor die faster. You're more likely to have a higher percentage of people in jail, and your health costs are higher. Economic development and performance is lower. Everything that you would say in society that counts as humanly important — a better life, better health, more cohesion, more individual happiness,

been looking at the details of educational change for 40 years, and the field has evolved. For one thing, we're tackling bigger parts of the problem. When I started in the early days, we were looking at innovative schools, small-scale reform. Then the effective schools research came along in the '70s, and we still weren't talking about systems. And then we had *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), which pointed out problems in the system, but nobody really responded. Finally, in 2002, with *No Child Left Behind*, we see a system response of a big nature for the first time. The evolution has been to recognize that you have to solve the bigger set of issues, not just the small set of a classroom and a school. So that perspective has become larger.

Also, the investment in innovation, development, success, and the research associated with that has also accumulated. And most importantly, we now have scores of practitioners who are practicing this. All my best ideas are coming from practitioners doing this work — principals, superintendents, literacy coaches, and so on. The sheer number of practitioners who are now doing this is may still only be 20% of the total group, but it's still a big number, and it's a growing number. We have never had so many people in the field that represent these ideas in action as we do now, in 2009. But there are still many ways to go wrong. We have to use what we know and realize that scores of committed practitioners doing this work collectively every day is the only thing that will get us there. The good news is that this is within our grasp.

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pointed way. The clarity and the specificity of the strategy are very well operationalized and transparently observable. And secondly, politicians and policy makers are increasingly interested in this, because the old strategies haven't worked, and these look like they *should* work. The benefits are political; that is, you're more likely to get re-elected if you make improvements in the public system. And they can see that moral purpose is another benefit.

THE WHOLE SOCIETY BENEFITS

Societal cohesion is part of an even bigger picture. Research around the world shows the relationship between the gap in educational performance in a country and the economic, social, and emotional consequences of the gap between low- and high-achieving educational systems. The U.S. has a wide gap. Most of the countries that

greater collective good, more money, economic development at the individual and societal level — the rates of those things go up as the gap becomes smaller. So this is an attractive societal proposition that's proven by way of the data, and now we have the micropicture, which is what it actually looks like to do this kind of reform on the ground in each and every classroom. This is why I'm optimistic, because these two things — macro indicators and micro reforms — look like they could easily intersect now, more so than in the past.

JSD: Are we at this point because of the age of the field and the collection of knowledge we have about what works? You wrote earlier this year that we're in this coming-of-age period for large-scale reform.

Fullan: In a way, that's true. I've

BLENDING TOGETHER, STEP BY STEP

Principal uses professional learning to combine two school cultures into one



BY LINDA E. MARTIN, TRACY SHAFER, AND SHERRY KRAGLER

There is no denying that combining two schools, or even opening a new school, is loaded with challenges and frustrations as well as high expectations. Principal Tracy Shafer saw a rural school consolidation as an opportunity to use professional development to create a community focused on student learning, meeting the need for high-quality schools. Wes-Del Elementary, a rural school in east-central Indiana with approxi-

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mately 355 students, was built to consolidate Gaston Elementary (grades K-2) and Harrison Elementary (grades 3-5). The newly joined staff and a focus on basic elements of professional development proved to be the ingredients for success for both adult and student learners.

BUILDING BLOCKS

During a two-year transition to consolidate the schools, Shafer was responsible for organizing professional development in both schools. Even though she and the teachers of both faculties had worked together on joint projects, she realized that each school had its own culture. Therefore, she planned common professional development meetings so teachers could learn to work together and develop a Wes-Del culture.

“The common professional development meetings gave me the opportunity to build a bridge between the two faculties and to establish the norms for all of our professional meetings,” said Shafer. Her vision required that faculty in both schools work together to establish several fundamental building blocks for a successful school.

PROFESSIONAL TRUST AND RESPECT

First and most important, teachers and staff needed to develop mutual trust for one another and understand how much they had in common. Several strategies helped them accomplish this task. One was the development of a historical timeline for the two schools. Shafer invited teachers to reflect on professional experiences

within their school. Their reflections ranged from discussing changes in teachers' clothing to changes in technology. Many teachers talked about changes in literacy instruction — from whole language to phonics to reading workshop to phonics.

Trust grows when teachers can reflect on the positive aspects of their profession and how they affect children. To facilitate sharing such reflections, meetings usually began with an icebreaker. For example, faculty played a version of musical chairs at one meeting. When the music stopped, teachers sat and shared something positive about their school day. Such activities helped teachers get to know each other and learn how to start meetings in a positive way.

The teachers, and, at times, Shafer, selected a focus for each professional development meeting. They might start by discussing professional literature or making instructional decisions based on the examination of student work, academic standards, and formal assessments. Focusing on issues that affected the schools helped faculty develop common goals and objectives to best meet student needs. Initially, teachers were grouped by grade level.

As they began to trust one another, teachers formed new groups that included teachers from across grade levels. They read and discussed short articles in small groups, and, after reflection, shared what they learned within a larger group setting with both faculties. Each group had a discussion leader. Later, the staff moved on to reading, discussing, and writing about professional texts. As teachers implemented the new strategies they learned, they shared their successes and concerns during team meetings.

The teachers knew they were in this learning experience together to help students succeed. They established norms for the meetings, such as be respectful and be an active listener.



INGREDIENTS
for professional
learning
highlighted
in this article:

- Establish trust and respect.
- Set common goals.
- Ensure time for learning.
- Collaborate and reflect.
- Develop instructional leadership.

COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT

Teachers learn over time in a collaborative environment that encourages them to focus on problems that hinder success in the classroom. Throughout the two-year transition, teachers were able to collaborate during the day within each school as well as across the schools. Roving substitutes covered classes while teachers worked in and across grade-level teams.

Through this collaboration, a professional environment began to emerge where teachers were committed to their individual professional needs as well as solving problems that were schoolwide or within a team. As teacher teams met, they began to examine student data.

There was no blame game, no one saying, "The 3rd-grade teachers should have taught this." During these discussions, it became clear that student test scores were low in two areas: writing and comprehension. As a result, teachers chose to focus professional development on these two areas.

LONG-TERM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Shafer notes, "Because the process of teacher change in beliefs and instruction takes time, it was important for me to give them the support they needed to continue to learn. Within this frame, professional development projects were implemented by individuals, by teams with common interests, and as a schoolwide effort to make curricular change." To support long-term professional development efforts, Wes-Del received support from faculty at a local university.

TEAM PROJECT: Children need to use writing to understand.

The first collaborative long-term learning project focused on student writing programs. Many teachers noted that students could not write well across the curriculum. In collaborative meetings with the university Professional Development Schools (PDS) liaison, teachers across grades and schools reflected on their individual professional concerns to implement a more effective writing program. As a result, the writing programs varied. Some focused on developing a workshop environment. Others maintained the structure of their established routines but included more strategies for assisting children while they write.

In addition, teachers began to focus on professional goals that extended beyond the classroom. For example, one primary-grade teacher worked toward and accomplished National Board Certification. After attending a professional writing workshop, a 3rd-grade teacher set a goal to write children's books.

SCHOOLWIDE PROJECT: Children need a variety of reading strategies.

While teachers were meeting some of their individual class goals, it was also important for the schools to set a

WHY IS THIS WORKING FOR WES-DEL ELEMENTARY?

Research highlights the importance of the principal being the instructional leader in a school — a leader who understands the importance of continuous professional renewal. The table below lists the literature that underlies the work of Shafer and her staff and helps to establish why Shafer was successful in creating a school where teachers are team players invested in professional development. Shafer has created an environment where professional development is not something done *to* the teachers but learning created *with* the teachers. Because of this, teachers were able to address their individual professional concerns as they developed schoolwide plans for their students. This demonstrates that when teachers are empowered to actively reflect on their learning and collaborate with others, they are more apt to make changes that will benefit students.

LITERATURE THAT SUPPORTS EFFECTIVE PRINCIPAL BEHAVIOR FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Effective principal behavior	Literature
Develop common goals and objectives with the faculty that meet student needs.	Guskey, 2003; Shindorf, Graham, & Messner, 1998.
Actively engage school faculty in professional development activities.	Joyce & Showers, 2002; Sarason, 1997.
Make time for teachers to reflect and collaborate about their learning.	Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy, 2000; Bean & Morewood, 2007; VanDeWeghe & Varney, 2006.
Develop long-term, coherent programs.	Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy, 2000; Guskey, 2000; Bean & Morewood, 2007.
Focus on teachers' individual professional growth needs as well as common schoolwide problems.	Guskey, 2000; Licklider, 1997; Marzano, 2003.
Support teachers' efforts to change.	Evans & Mohr, 1999; Klingner, Vaughn, Hughes, & Arguelles, 1999.
Develop a community (principal, teachers, and parents) of learners.	Donaldson 2007; Marzano, 2003; Niesz, 2007; Sarason, 1997.
Empower teachers to have ownership for their professional development.	Bean & Morewood, 2007; Zimelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2005.

common goal for inquiry. State testing had revealed that students in both schools were not scoring at an adequate level in reading comprehension. After attending an NSDC conference, educators from both schools (including administrators and teacher leaders) began to think about how to design professional development to meet all teachers' needs.

In order to build a common understanding across grade levels in both schools, the faculty used the text *Mosaic of Thought: Teaching Comprehension in a Reader's Workshop* (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997). During the first year of the project, a

core group of teachers, including one from each grade (K-5) as well as the PDS university liaison and Shafer, held monthly meetings to read the text and think about how to use it in schoolwide professional development. To prepare for these meetings, the team read assigned chapters from the text and reflected on the implementation of these strategies during discussions as well as in journal entries. The teachers always left the monthly meetings with a new strategy to try in their classrooms.

The next year, the schools continued the study of reading comprehension strategies, and every staff mem-

ber received a copy of the Keene and Zimmermann text. This time, the core group of teachers became the leadership team that helped plan and implement schoolwide professional development meetings.

Each leadership team member led small-group discussions and offered peer support. At each meeting, teachers reflected in a journal about their experiences and were invited to share what they were learning. Together, they talked about student artifacts that demonstrated the effectiveness of their instruction. These open discussions allowed teachers to problem-solve as they worked through the

challenges of implementing new strategies.

BECOMING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS

“The faculty and I came to realize that learning is a community affair,” said Shafer. “Since we had benefited from our professional inquiry, we felt that it was important to also involve the families in the community as learners with activities that support their children.” The faculty developed a Food, Fun, and Family night as a way to engage parents within the school with their children. Faculty organize three programs each year. These nights include food served by the school staff, a general meeting with a guest speaker focusing on important topics for parents, a family activity to be displayed at home, teacher-led sessions to give parents specific support, such as helping children with homework, and prizes donated by area businesses.

THE RESULTS ARE IN

Through all of these collaborative efforts, the faculty has established a positive culture and an environment that supports its professional needs and student learning. Shafer and the teachers in her school demonstrate that schoolwide reform is possible. However, such change requires commitment from all stakeholders in the school and the community. Reform has to be respectful to not only student needs but also the teachers. As Bean and Morewood (2007) state, “The best professional development is that in which schools function in a collaborative, collegial fashion in which all personnel strive to achieve set goals for promoting literacy achievement” (p. 391).

As a result of the intentional and collaborative effort made by the professionals at Wes-Del Elementary to improve the quality of their instructional program, student performance

Wes-Del Elementary Gaston, Ind.

Enrollment: 360
Grades: K-5
Staff: 35 teachers
Racial/ethnic mix:
 White: 97%
 Black: 0%
 Hispanic: 1%
 Asian/Pacific Islander: 0%
 Native American: 0%
 Other: 2%
Limited English proficient: 1%
Languages spoken: English
Free/reduced lunch: 41%
Special education: 21%
Contact: Tracy Shafer, principal
E-mail: tshafer@wes-del.k12.in.us

on state-mandated tests has changed significantly. Because of low test scores, the school was on academic watch by the state of Indiana in 1998-2001. Wes-Del Elementary is now identified as an exemplary school. As one teacher noted, “What an awesome responsibility ... knowing that our teaching matters so much. We have become activists, defending our right to teach wisely and well.”

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WEIGHING *the* WORKSHOP

ASSESS THE MERITS WITH SIX KEY CRITERIA FOR PLANNING AND EVALUATION

BY CATHERINE A. LITTLE AND KRISTINA AYERS PAUL

Every teacher can recall a range of experiences in professional development workshops. Some of these may have provided opportunities in which teachers felt engaged, empowered, and supported as learners, while others felt disconnected from practice. Although we recognize that workshops, particularly those with no follow-up support, are not the ideal learning experience for teachers, we also acknowledge that some form of workshop is still a common approach in professional development in the United States. Therefore, even within a context calling for more comprehensive professional

development, the workshop merits careful examination in terms of the quality of learning it can provide. Designers, facilitators, and evaluators need tools to guide reflection on quality that will lead to the best possible learning experience for teachers.

We developed and used the planning and evaluation framework described here as part of a statewide evaluation of professional development for K-12 teachers in a variety of

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disciplines (Little, Paul, Wilson, Kearney, & Hines, 2008). While we developed this framework as a tool for formative evaluation, we expect that it will be equally useful to planners as a guide for designing workshop-style professional development.

FRAMEWORK

As we prepared to evaluate professional development that incorporated workshops, we continually returned to key principles such as those stated in the recent NSDC report on the status of professional learning. “Effective professional development is 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” (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009, p. 5). While we acknowledge the importance of more comprehensive professional development including sustained learning opportunities, we examined how workshops and similar experiences as a part of that system must be designed to reflect certain quality indicators.

Our team of current and former classroom teachers and professional development facilitators drew upon their own workshop experiences, as well as the literature on professional development and adult learning, to identify key criteria for high-quality learning within workshops. The criteria fell into six key categories: *coherence, climate, instructional strategies, participant engagement, logistical considerations for participant learning, and assessment and feedback.*

1. COHERENCE

Birman, Desimone, Porter, and Garet (2000) identified coherence as a critical component of professional development that promotes changes in teacher knowledge and classroom practice. In their definition, coherence refers to how professional development connects to teachers’ classroom practice and professional goals, as well as the standards that guide curriculum and instruction in schools. The following criteria reflect coherence within a high-quality learning experience:

- Designers build professional development around **substantive and connected content** that is appropriate to and representative of the relevant discipline and participant teaching assignments. The emphasis is on ensuring that the content itself is relevant to teachers and of high quality.
- The learning experience offers specific and explicit **connections to standards**. Not only do facilitators



INGREDIENTS
for professional
learning
highlighted
in this article:

- Plan learning experiences thoughtfully.
- Measure impact of professional learning.
- Connect learning to the classroom.
- Differentiate adult learning.

make connections to standards in planning a high-quality learning experience, they also devote specific attention to having teachers explore or review those connections within the experience.

- Facilitators highlight specific **connections to assessment** through a focus on assessment strategies linked to content and the use of assessment data in instructional decision making.
- **Classroom-applicable activities** are integrated into professional development. This criterion does not mean that the learning experience must be “make-and-take” nor that it must provide activities that teachers will be able to use immediately without careful consideration of how to integrate them. However, high-quality professional development provides specific applications and/or opportunities for teachers to construct their own classroom connections to the content they are learning.
- High-quality professional development maintains a **focus on K-12 students**. This criterion seems like

common sense, but keeping this focus at the forefront of planning helps to center professional development around the learning implications for classrooms and the ultimate purpose for teacher professional learning.

2. CLIMATE

The climate for learning is an important consideration for adult participants, just as it is for K-12 students. The climate of professional development sets a tone for learning, encouraging participant engagement and also communicating the importance of climate for promoting student engagement. Key considerations for climate include understanding participants as adult learners as well as creating a general environment of respect and purposeful activity.

- **Participants are treated as professionals** in both explicit and implicit ways. Facilitators demonstrate respect for the professional knowledge and experiences that participants bring. Facilitators also communicate professional respect through a physical environment that is comfortable for adults and includes easy access to important amenities.
- High-quality learning experiences promote an **interactive climate** in which participants feel welcome to share ideas, ask questions, and express their opinions and experiences as related to the classroom context.
- There is an **interchange of questions and answers** among facilitators and participants. Facilitators invite questions and are responsive in the answers and resources that they recommend. Facilitators also ask questions to prompt discussion, and they encourage interchange among participants, so that an overall professional conversation occurs among the educators present.
- There is **time for discussion and reflection**, including specific time allotted for participants to consider how what they are learning

applies to their own setting. Such reflection time might be guided by structured questions or left more open to participant response.

3. INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

The rationale for the Quality Teaching standard from NSDC's Standards for Staff Development (2001) highlights that to the extent possible, participants in professional development should experience instruction the way that they are intended to use it. Moreover, the Design and Learning standards discuss careful planning of learning experiences for teachers and the integration of theories and research on how adults learn as well as how children learn. These standards inform the criteria for planning and evaluating the strategies and activities used within a professional learning context.

- Participants in high-quality learning engage in **substantive activities** that are grounded in quality content, organized around significant learning objectives for teachers and, by extension, their students, and planned so that they engage teachers in critical thinking about their own practice.

- High-quality professional development uses **appropriately varied delivery formats**, integrating strategies that are relevant to the content and to the participants. This criterion also emphasizes the importance of using high-quality materials that support content acquisition and delivery.

- Facilitators **model instructional strategies** for teacher participants. These learning experiences also provide an effective balance of strategies between those that put teachers in the role of their students and those that address teachers directly as adult learners.

- **Questioning** provides the groundwork for active communication between the facilitator and participants. Facilitators model questioning strategies relevant to the content

and encourage discussion of question preparation and delivery. They use well-designed questions to guide discussions and small-group activities.

- High-quality learning reflects **attention to varying participant readiness and experience levels**. Flexible activities with multiple entry points, respectful discussion, and responsive grouping patterns are among the strategies that facilitators may use to provide a differentiated response to the range of participant readiness levels.

- High-quality learning uses **varying groupings that are appropriate to the tasks**. This criterion reflects an overall focus on purposeful organization of activities to promote optimal learning and emphasizes giving teachers options for how and with whom they work.

4. PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT

Planning for effective professional development includes careful consideration of how and in what grouping context participants will work. Evaluation of these experiences, therefore, can include observation of how participants are involved in activities and the degree to which their engagement is evident.

This theme and its criteria are perhaps more relevant for evaluation than for planning, but are included here to emphasize the focus on the teacher as engaged learner.

- **Participant engagement in large-group settings** includes attention to how and to what degree participants are involved with learning when a whole group is together, as in a whole-group content delivery context or whole-group discussions.

- **Participant engagement in small-group settings** reflects attention to how teachers are invited to work with one another on tasks and discussions, and how on-task learning is fostered by the facilitator and by participants themselves.

5. LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR PARTICIPANT LEARNING

Planning for professional development requires attention to many organizational and management details. These, too, form part of the overall plan for and assessment of quality.

- High-quality learning experiences make **effective use of time**, with purposeful yet flexible organization to maintain focus on intended outcomes and to respond to participant needs. Breaks are strategically provided at regular intervals, are of sufficient length, and end on time, and the overall learning experience adheres to a schedule that respects participant time.

- The **materials and resources supplied to participants** are organized and provided in adequate supply. Resources include sufficient detail and documentation to allow participants to recall key understandings at a later time.

- If appropriate, participants are provided with **access and time to use technology** that is integrated within the learning opportunity. Facilitators maintain an appropriate participant-to-technology ratio and recognize and respect individual readiness levels.

6. ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

Just as classroom instruction must be grounded in quality assessment that allows educators to monitor student learning and make instructional decisions based on data, high-quality professional development is also grounded in assessment and incorporates assessment within the overall process.

- Decision making about professional development is guided by overarching goals and by **evidence of learning needs among teachers**. Such evidence may be drawn from student assessment data, teachers' documented goals for growth, district teacher evaluation data, and other sources.

- During implementation, **ongo-**

ing assessment should be incorporated through formal and informal methods. Facilitators use a variety of strategies to check for understanding and to adjust the pace and content of instruction according to teachers' demonstrated needs.

- Participants have multiple **opportunities to demonstrate learning**. In order to conduct ongoing assessment, facilitators must encourage teachers to communicate what they are learning; moreover, opportunities to demonstrate and share learning help to promote engagement and active connections between the professional development content and classroom practice.

- As participants demonstrate their learning, facilitators provide **respectful and appropriate feedback** to help participants evaluate their own progress toward the stated learning objectives and individual professional goals.

- High-quality professional development is not a one-shot session but includes some version of **follow-up**, whether a formal follow-up with the same facilitator or a structured ongoing conversation. Although often the workshop-oriented structure does not

include this element, it is perhaps the most critical element for improving the likelihood that changes in classroom practice will result.

APPLICATIONS OF THE FRAMEWORK

We see several possibilities for using these criteria as a framework for planning and evaluating professional development. In our experience as evaluators charged with making formative recommendations to professional learning designers, we identified sample performance indicators for each criterion and looked for evidence of these as we observed the learning in action. We then used our observation notes to highlight areas of strength and raise questions and concerns for facilitators, encouraging them to use our observations in planning their ongoing work with participants. We also see that these criteria might be used as a planning tool, much as students might refer to an assessment rubric as they engage in the development of a product. After articulating professional learning goals and objectives, planners might then use the criteria to ensure that all aspects of creating high-quality learning have

been considered in their design. Furthermore, the criteria can guide ongoing evaluation as a school, district, or other learning organization strives to build high-quality learning for teachers that ultimately promote high-quality learning for students.

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LASTING IMPRESSION

Targeted learning plan has a maximum impact on teacher practice

BY JEFF NELSEN AND AMALIA CUDEIRO

The literacy coach approaches the principal, beaming and clearly energized. “That was one of the best professional development sessions we’ve had here! It was clear, creative, provided useful and practical information, engaged the teachers in dialogue and modeling, and even provided them with all the materials they’ll need to implement the practices that were presented. I think having everyone use these strategies on a regular basis will really take care of our reading comprehension problem.” The principal is

also smiling and agrees that it was an excellent session. The principal congratulates the coach on her good work and agrees that the staff left feeling empowered. As the principal reflects on the day, however, he is very aware that the research shows that even successful, high-quality professional development leads to about a 5% implementation rate. The principal makes a note in his planner to schedule a session with the coach the following morning to discuss plans for additional strategies necessary to ensure that teachers continue to learn and implement what they learned today.

MAKING A CULTURE SHIFT

How can schools shift from isolated incidents of professional development to a culture of professional learning? Most professional development plans and strategies simply offer high-quality training or activities that teachers then decide how (or if at all) to implement in their classrooms (Fullan, 2007). By using a targeted professional learning plan, schools can increase the likelihood of student success by using cycles of learning to incorporate professional development lessons into daily school and classroom rhythms.

The professional learning model detailed here is designed around repeated cycles of learning sessions lasting six to eight weeks linked with supports such as observation and coaching, professional readings, looking at student work, peer observations, and walk-throughs. Such supports are essential for full implementation of the learning in every classroom for every student every day (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Taken together, these actions have the potential to move a school a giant step forward toward coherence and tighter coupling, where what and how students are learning is a matter of common knowledge (Elmore, 2000), and most importantly, leading to a culture where adult learning becomes as common as student learning.

TARGET A FEW INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

As is often the case, less is more when it comes to establishing a culture of professional learning. If we're trying to build true expertise in each faculty member rather than just expose them to the ideas, we cannot really expect to implement all of Marzano's strategies or all six components of balanced literacy in the same year. Since a school can reasonably expect to build true expertise in only one or two instructional practices per year, it is important that educators select powerful strategies. A good illustration of this comes from 110 high schools in Chicago that have recently begun implementing a new model of professional learning, and with help from the district's academic coaches, have identified powerful practices that teachers model in their instruction in such a way that they become learning

**INGREDIENTS
for professional
learning
highlighted
in this article:**

- Offer ongoing, sustained learning.
- Follow up workshops with support and coaching.
- Target selected practices.
- Open classroom doors.

practices that students can use throughout their schooling.

THE MODEL: CYCLES OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The intent of this model is to create a professional learning plan that builds expertise in all staff through repeated cycles of high-quality learning, followed by opportunities for practicing, receiving feedback, observing colleagues, ongoing professional reading, and peer discussion about the practices, including examining the impact of the practices on student learning by looking at student work and reviewing student performance data. Key concepts of the model are:

- **Repeated cycles**

In order for teachers to master instructional practices and add them to their repertoire, it is necessary for

them to be engaged in all aspects of professional learning at least four times before they can be expected to have full mastery of that strategy (Saphier & Gower, 1997). Many schools plan on a cycle per quarter since each cycle takes six to eight weeks of learning sessions. A typical scenario might look as follows:

Weeks 1-2: Teachers participate in professional learning about a targeted instructional area, such as reading comprehension, and teachers begin to practice what they have learned in their classrooms. Professional reading begins on a weekly basis.

Weeks 3-6: Teachers schedule time to observe each other using the newly learned strategies. The instructional leadership team, administrative team, and others begin visiting classrooms on targeted learning walks to see what additional training or support teachers need. Instructional coaches schedule time to observe teachers and give feedback. Teacher collaboration teams meet regularly to discuss implementation of the new practices and the impact of the practices on student learning by looking at student work and course assessment data.

Weeks 7-8: All activities described above continue. The instructional leadership team visits all classrooms to measure the level of implementation of the powerful practices across the school and modifies their plan for the next cycle based on the data received.

- **Quality learning opportunities**

While some schools and districts have the internal capacity to provide direct training to their teachers, others seek out experienced training partners to guide them through this process. Introducing new concepts and skills to teachers through high-quality learning led by seasoned professionals with knowledge of the practices is critical if we expect teachers to implement a strategy or practice in a classroom setting. Quality learning

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includes explanation of the concepts underlying the practice, modeling how the practice would look in a classroom, connecting the practice to research and results, providing strategies for differentiating for learners at different levels, giving participants opportunities during the training for experimentation and discussion, and introducing all materials needed to implement the practice.

- **Opportunities for safe practice**

Allowing teachers multiple chances over several weeks to experiment with the new strategies in a low-risk environment, such as their own regular teaching settings, is another important consideration. While part of the intent of this model is to open up practice and get more people into more classrooms more often, the first week or two after a learning session is not a good time for administrators who evaluate teachers to go into classrooms with a checklist. Teachers need time to gain confidence with the new skills, and confidence grows best in supportive cultures.

- **Observing colleagues**

Many teachers learn best by observing colleagues using the strategy they are attempting to learn themselves. Having each teacher observe several other teachers practicing the new strategy and discussing what they observed in the initial learning sessions can be a powerful support. It also gives teachers the opportunity to develop a common vocabulary around the new practice and sends a strong message that “we’re all in this together.”

- **Receiving feedback**

Learning occurs at a deep level when a teacher is thinking about good practice while implementing the strategy. Observation by a coach or peer teacher, paired with structured feedback that reinforces teachers’ positive actions and suggests specific improve-

Allowing teachers multiple chances over several weeks to experiment with the new strategies in a low-risk environment, such as their own regular teaching settings, is important.

ments, is an effective, research-based tool for building mastery.

- **Professional reading**

The knowledge base about effective teaching practice is growing constantly, yet few teachers have the time to identify it. We have seen a powerful impact when schools make it easier for teachers to stay informed about new findings by having a specific plan for providing highlighted articles weekly to teachers tied directly to the focus of the current professional learning cycle. The expectation is that each person will quickly review at least the highlighted sections of each article and that occasionally they will discuss articles with peers. Using this strategy, in one school year, teachers will review at least 36 articles that support and clarify the work they are doing.

- **Peer discussion/looking at student work/data review**

Many scholars posit that learning is essentially a social activity, and that people make meaning through conversation. Having teachers meet in teams on a regular basis to discuss the successes and challenges of implementation is a critical part of professional learning.

Opportunities for looking at student work and reviewing student assessment data to monitor the impact of new instructional strategies on student learning help teachers see why they need to make changes in their practice. This process gives teachers the data that will inform how they adjust their use of the strategies according to specific student needs.

- **Monitor, measure, and modify**

The ongoing process of having the principal, the instructional leadership team, and other school leaders conduct frequent visits to all classrooms to have a clear understanding of the implementation level of new practices begins in the third week of the cycle. This is NOT part of the teacher evaluation process, but is rather a means to gather informal data and to facilitate good decisions about future learning and resource allocation (Cudeiro, 2009).

Measuring the implementation level across the school during the final week of the cycle allows the leadership to modify plans for the next cycle, so that the consistent level of expertise across the staff builds from cycle to cycle.

VISION BECOMES REALITY

Imagine a classroom where students of different ages are working together in small groups on projects selected by their area of interest. The teacher circulates with a clipboard, helping as needed and making notes about student mastery level of different standards.

Another educator enters the room, observes for a while, then makes specific suggestions to the teacher about how to increase the rigor of the work for some small groups. The visitor leaves the room, and the teacher turns to the student groups with modifications for their work.

Or imagine being invited to a school’s faculty meeting, where a teacher describes her visit to a colleague’s room earlier in the day, when she observed that several students

were not paying attention. The teacher who was observed agrees that the new strategy she was trying after their recent professional development did not go as well as she had hoped and asks the group for suggestions. Another teacher describes using the strategy to great effect in her room and invites the teacher to come and observe the following morning. After the group arranges to cover the visiting teacher's class, they move on to another challenge.

Sound too good to be true? These schools are among many examples of previously underperforming schools that are now exemplary models of learning. That's not an accident. While creating a professional learning community at any school is challenging, it can only happen through intentional leadership.

Being strategic about what teachers need to learn and implementing a targeted professional learning plan with repeated cycles that provides teachers with the support they need to develop expertise are great ways to move toward that goal as well as toward the ultimate goal of improving student learning.

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NSDC's standards to the rescue

Focus on context, process, and content provides a strong foothold for mentor program

BY SHARYN APPOLLONI

Each year, 200 novice teachers arrive at the schools in our large district in Reno, Nev. Our challenge was to create a comprehensive system of support for these teachers. We found our solution when we hired 10 full-time mentors to provide additional support for these new educators — our dreams came true.

For eight years, the district had provided a site-mentor for each of the novice teachers and required attendance in a two-year program of study as part of the New Teacher Academy. The Induction and Mentoring Program then added full-release mentors to the circle of support. Turning to NSDC's Standards for Staff

Development for guidance in planning the new mentors' professional learning made all the difference in how our success unfolded.

My challenge as administrator of the 10 full-time mentors was to answer the following questions:

1. What should the new mentors know and be able to do in order to meet the twin goals of accelerating the growth of novice teachers and increasing their retention rate in an effort to support student achievement?
2. What professional learning had to occur for the mentors in order to prepare them for this challenge?

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3. How will the district know that the mentors have been successful in meeting these goals? What would be the success indicators? What data should the district collect?

NSDC's Standards for Staff Development (NSDC, 2001) provided the framework for answering these questions.

In *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*, Lois Brown Easton (2008) describes three ways to focus professional learning. One is to use NSDC's standards. Another is to use a school improvement focus. The third focuses on a systemwide approach. Although each of these approaches is useful, the context determines which is the most appropriate. In our system and context, NSDC's standards were the key to forming professional learning for

the new mentors. The framework of the standards and questions posed by Easton in *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning* gave structure to our learning.

CONTEXT: What role does context play in focusing professional learning?

In order to help focus mentors on their own professional learning, the mentor leader created a professional learning community. Every Friday, the group met for three hours and spent most of their time engaged in professional learning. We called these meetings Friday Forums. A constructivist approach — the idea that the group would construct its own knowledge and make meaning together — guided the group in formulating its vision of the craft of mentoring. Group members had abundant resources to support their adult learning and collaboration.

PROCESS: What kind of design?

To have an impact on student achievement, professional learning should consider a number of factors, including design, which refers to the use of “learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal” (Easton, 2008, p. 25).

In the context of our full-release mentoring program, the most applicable design solution was to use container processes, designs that include multiple strategies (Easton, 2008, pp. 25–26). Designs especially appropriate for the mentors include action research, assessment, case discussions, classroom walk-throughs, data analysis, dialogue, differentiated coaching, study groups, tuning protocols, and videos.

For best results, the people who will engage in a learning experience need to participate in selecting the design. As group leader, I facilitated the mentors in deciding how they would function as a learning community, beginning with establishing



norms for collaboration, which then appeared on every meeting agenda.

Each Friday Forum began with a grounding question to model the setting of norms, provide an opportunity for celebrations, and bring the group focus into the here and now. Seated in a circle at one end of the room, every person was given the opportunity to answer the grounding question. The norms for behavior in this context were to listen with no interruptions, and, when everyone was finished, the first person to speak offered a summary of what was said (Garmston & Wellman, 2002, p. 4). This grounding circle became a center point for the most cherished moments of the learning community.

With this positive learning environment setting the stage for each meeting, the remaining time for the forum progressed in a respectful fashion, with all participants honoring the norms of collaboration outlined in Garmston and Wellman’s seven norms of collaborative work (2002, p. 46).

The mentors had opportunities to make decisions about many aspects of their learning in addition to design questions. I facilitated them in deciding policies and procedures that would guide the group in its work. According to Easton, “No single member of the group has all the information or skills needed for a task; all of them have some information and some skills, which they offer to the whole group” (NSDC conference handout, 2008, p. 80).

For example, one question that the group discussed at length was, “Should we write a recommendation for a novice at the end of the year or not? What are the ramifications of writing one for a particular novice and not another novice?” I charted discussion points to help visualize the group’s thinking. The group came to a consensus that writing letters of recommendation did not match their core beliefs. As always during dialogue and discussion, one mentor kept track of the raised hands and called on people in that order. Everyone participated, and the group knew how and why it came to its conclusion.

Learning to function as a community of learners was as much a part of the group’s education as learning how to mentor. To facilitate the former, mentors completed various inventories that resulted in understanding their strengths, personality traits, learning styles, belief systems, cognitive styles, and professional skills and needs.

They studied adult learning theory and change theory. All of this information provided the necessary background for making decisions about the content of their continuous professional learning. (See professional learning matrix on p. 40.)

CONTENT: What do learners need to know?

We used a series of steps for determining the content of the group’s professional learning, drawing upon

both NSDC’s standards and steps outlined by Easton (2008, pp. 42-49).

1. Answer the question: What should students — in this case novice teachers — know and be able to do?
2. Keeping in mind what novices need to know and be able to do, consider what teachers — in this case mentors — should know and be able to do.
3. Look at how well the current professional learning program works to support needed content.
4. Design your own professional learning program.
5. Determine indicators of success for novices and their mentors.
6. Determine indicators of success for others in the system.

In addition to the mentors’ completion of inventories and a needs assessment to help determine the content of their professional learning, their novices also completed a needs assessment.

We used these collective data to determine our desired learning outcomes, which were organized into categories based on the needed knowledge, attitude, skills, aspiration, and

Washoe County School District
Reno, Nev.

Number of schools: 104
Enrollment: 63,310
Staff: 7,418
Racial/ethnic mix:
White: 53.8%
Black: 3.8%
Hispanic: 33.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander: 6.5%
Native American: 2.5%
Other: 0%
Limited English proficient: 17.6%
Free/reduced lunch: 38.1%
Special education: 13%
Contact: Sharyn Appolloni, education specialist
E-mail: sappolloni@washoe.k12.nv.us
Web site: www.washoe.k12.nv.us/staff/mentor-teacher-program

behavior, also known as KASAB (Killion, 2008.)

KNOWLEDGE: Conceptual understanding of information, theories, principles, and research.

Exemplary mentors understand the research-based principles of planning, classroom management, instruction, assessment, professional responsibility, parent communication, family

involvement, diverse needs of students, progress monitoring, phases of new teacher development, relationship building, providing technical support, providing emotional support, differentiated coaching, formative assessment of novices, student discipline, maintaining professional integrity, adult learning theory, data-driven dialogue, district goals, New Teacher Academy requirements, expectations of each principal, parent communication, and grading and record keeping.

ATTITUDE: Beliefs about the value of particular information or strategies.

Effective mentors believe:

- I am a member of a team that is supporting novices; the team includes the site-mentors, site-facilitators, administrators, parents, colleagues, and members of the New Teacher Academy.
- I am a mentor teacher, not an evaluator.
- I believe in maintaining confidentiality, unless there is a safety issue.
- I believe in the power of Cognitive Coaching, and if neces-

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	HOURS PER YEAR				
Washoe County School District FULL-RELEASE MENTORS 2006-09	Before hiring mentors	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Action research	varied				15
Adult learning theory; change theory		5	5		
Assessment for learning with R. Stiggins		15	5	5	5
Classroom management	varied	10	10	5	5
Cognitive Coaching with L. Sawyer and J. Dyer	30	30	30	15	15
Curriculum and standards implementation	varied	5	5	5	5
Data-driven dialogue with L. Lipton and B. Wellman	15	5	5	5	5
Differentiated coaching with J. Kise				15	5
Differentiated instruction	varied	5	5	5	5
Mentoring matters with L. Lipton and B. Wellman	15	5	5	10	5
Instructional strategies	15	5	5	5	5
Formative assessment of novices		15	10	5	5
Foundations of mentoring	15	10	5	5	5
Group study*		10	10	10	10
Instructional coaching with J. Knight		15	5		
Learning/teaching/cognitive/personality styles	varied	5	5		
Online mentoring				10	15
Observation and feedback		10	5	5	5
Presentation skills			5	5	5
RTI				5	5
Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)		5	5		
Student work analysis	varied		5	10	15
Teach for Success (T4S)				5	5
Teacher performance rubrics (4 Domains)	varied	15	10	5	5
Technology	varied	5	5	10	15

* Each year we emphasized these particular content pieces in addition to other content and designs:
 Year 1: *Cognitive Coaching* (Costa & Garmston, 2002); *Now Discover Your Strengths* (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001).
 Year 2: *Getting Organized* (Crouch, 2007); *Tools for Teaching*, (Jones, 2007); *Reflective Analysis of Student Work* (Bella, 2004).
 Year 3: *Mentoring Matters* (Lipton & Wellman, 2003); *Classroom Instruction That Works* (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001).
 Year 4: *Differentiated Coaching* (Kise, 2006).

sary will collaborate and consult, with the goal of supporting the novice in becoming more self-directed (Costa & Garmston, 2002, p. 17).

- I make a difference in the lives of students by accelerating the growth of novice teachers and

increasing their willingness to remain in education.

SKILLS: Strategies and processes to apply knowledge.

Effective mentors learn to build trust, coach, collaborate, consult, move from buddy to growth agent,

observe teachers and students with a trained eye, give specific feedback, teach novices to analyze student work, mentor without evaluating, maintain confidentiality, communicate effectively with site administrators, encourage reluctant novices, model lessons, offer timely resources, provide

time-management strategies, use technology effectively, and use data to guide dialogue.

ASPIRATION: Desire, or internal motivation, to engage in a particular practice.

The best mentors are those with a passion for building the capacity of others. They “embrace a growth orientation, understanding that the work is to increase their colleague’s effectiveness as professional problem solvers and decision makers” (Lipton & Wellman, 2003, p. 1.) They genuinely respect novices and find it satisfying to listen to novices’ needs, accompanying them on a journey from where the novice is to where the novice wants to be (Costa & Garmston, 2002, p. 21). Effective mentors desire to participate in whatever professional learning opportunities will help them hone their craft.

BEHAVIOR: Consistent application of knowledge and skills.

Mentors learn to maintain the integrity of the program’s purpose and vision through the continued constructivist study of the mentoring. They read and discuss books and articles written by specialists in education and mentoring. They celebrate their weekly successes and spend time problem solving, skill building, collecting data, applying research to their decision making, and engaging in other forms of professional learning for continuous improvement. They embrace the notion of consistency in application and welcome opportunities to engage in observation of each other’s practice as a growth experience.

All of these desired outcomes for mentors are the answer to the question of what mentors need to know and be able to do. Other guiding questions for shaping our learning were: How will the district know that the mentors have been successful in meeting the twin challenges of higher

retention and performance rates? What would be the success indicators? Which data should we collect?

MEASURING PROGRESS

According to NSDC’s Standards for Staff Development, multiple sources of data guide improvement and demonstrate impact (NSDC, 2001). The data to assess our progress toward success indicators came from a number of sources.

The district hired an outside evaluator to collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data. The outside evaluator used various methods to collect data, including focus groups and surveys of novices and their administrators. In addition, the district’s in-house evaluation team studied retention and performance data. The retention rates of novices increased to 97.9% in 2009, while the rate of unsatisfactory performance evaluations declined.

The multiple sources of information established that there was an added value with the addition of the full-release mentors. I attribute this to:

1. The enhanced trust between a novice and a mentor who is not on-site;
2. The many hours a highly trained, fully released mentor can observe and give feedback;
3. The available time for the mentor to accompany the novice on focused classroom observations across the district; and
4. The teamwork of the site-mentor, site-administrator, and full-release mentor, encircling the novice with layers of support.

From this experience, the district learned that using NSDC’s standards to plan the mentors’ professional learning was a significant factor in accelerating mentors’ growth. By following the standards, the district was able to focus on the best course of action.

The combination of context,

process, and content standards provided the scaffold needed to build the capacity of these teacher leaders.

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FROM GROUP TO TEAM

Skilled facilitation moves a group from a collection of individuals to an effective team

BY GINNY V. LEE

It is a Saturday morning, and I am sitting with a group of 15 new and aspiring school site administrators. As part of their work toward an MS in educational leadership, this group of experienced educators is enrolled in an elective course, “Group Facilitation for School Leaders.” The 12 women and three men are all experienced K-12 teachers. Collectively, they have led and served on numerous committees

and work groups at their sites and in their districts.

We are discussing the concept of teams and communities in school settings. I ask the group, “In your view, what is the difference between a group and a team?” They think for a minute. How IS a team different from a group? They toss around some ideas: Is one made up of volunteers and the other not? Does one have a formal affiliation and the other not? As they postulate and discard ideas, their thinking becomes clearer, and

they decide that the most important ways that a team differs from a group are these:

- Teams share a common purpose and goal.
- Team members are interdependent; they understand that they need to work well as a unit in order to complete their task.

As the group discusses what it’s like to work as part of an effective team, they realize that high-functioning teams require member commitment to the group and its purpose;

collaboration and cooperation; mutual respect and support; accountability to each other and to the desired outcomes; and a trusting and safe environment. They conclude that all teams are groups but not all groups are teams.

Groups, for example, may consist of people who share a role and responsibilities that provide an opportunity for the group to evolve to a team (for example, 4th-grade teachers, English department members), but this evolution does not always occur (Killion, 2006).

When I ask the group how many of them have been part of a high-functioning, effective team at their site or in their district, two people raise their hands. Most are shaking their heads as they realize how little experience they have with effective teamwork. They cite instances of contrived collegiality (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990) and working on joint tasks in the most expeditious way possible, pushing hastily through challenging discussions, arriving at decisions on the fly, and focusing on getting the work done. At this point, I present concepts and strategies that support facilitators in understanding and addressing key issues that emerge during the initial stages of team development.

TEACHER COLLABORATION: PROMISES AND PITFALLS

Since the publication of Little's 1982 study, "Norms of collegiality and experimentation: Workplace conditions of school success," educators have compiled a considerable body of knowledge around the importance of teacher collaboration as a component of professional learning (Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002; Lieberman, 1996; Speck & Knipe, 2001). We see the concept of collabora-

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**INGREDIENTS
for professional
learning
highlighted
in this article:**

- Support team development.
- Ensure strong team facilitation.
- Establish trust.
- Set common goals.

tion embedded in the concept of professional learning communities as well as in NSDC's Standards for Staff Development (NSDC, 2001). As districts and schools embrace the promise of collaboration to support teachers in honing practice, educators have become increasingly adept at developing structures and processes that establish regular opportunities for teachers to come together and engage in meaningful professional dialogue focused on student learning.

In many ways, our understanding of teacher collaboration for professional learning parallels a body of work on team development and performance.

Despite the plethora of examples, strategies, formats, protocols, and promise, the transition from a group to a collaborative team is not always smooth or effective. Given the norms of autonomy and private practice that have informed teaching for so many decades (Little, 1982), this is not surprising. Nevertheless, many efforts to support teachers in moving from being participants of groups to being members of collaborative teams miss

the mark by overlooking stages in team development that can make or break the process.

In my experience working directly with collaborative groups and listening to my students describe their experiences, I have come to identify a number of false assumptions that educators often make about such work:

1. If group members don't know each other well, a series of ice-breakers will bring them together.
2. A group of educators knows how to engage with each other as professionals.
3. If the facilitator of the group is unsure about the group's capacity to engage professionally, developing a set of norms will resolve this issue.
4. Being clear with a group about tasks, structure, and accountability will lead to quality group output.

While the strategies in the list above contain some useful ideas for supporting team or community development, these ideas oversimplify and trivialize the issues that members bring to a team. Such Band-Aid solutions might establish a surface of civility among group members, but they will not suffice to support the kind of deep connection (with each other and with the team's purpose) and trust that enable teams to soar.

As I listen to students discuss negative colleagues, individuals who don't understand why collaboration is good idea or who take a "been there, done that" attitude, I am touched by the depth of their frustration and their belief in the potential benefits to be gained. What I see missing for them is a deep understanding of the questions and issues that team members naturally bring with them to a team

In many ways, our understanding of teacher collaboration for professional learning parallels a body of work on team development and performance.

and a lack of authentic tools with which to address these matters.

MODELS OF TEAM DEVELOPMENT

One of the best-known theories of team development is captured in Tuckman’s model of groups going through the predictable stages of “forming, storming, norming, and performing” (Tuckman, 1965). This model acknowledges the inevitable clash of assumptions, beliefs, perspectives, goals, and values that individuals bring with them to any group endeavor. The model recognizes the need for groups to engage in examining and resolving core relational and operational questions before they can be expected to work together effectively.

For a facilitator to support the process of a team advancing from the forming to the performing stage, he or she must understand the core issues that typically arise for team participants at each stage and realize what happens to a team when the issues are not satisfactorily resolved. Moreover, the facilitator must be able to recognize signs that individuals

or subgroups have not resolved one or more of these questions and must be able to intervene appropriately. All too often, team facilitators are limited in their capacity to engage the deep issues and rely on the set of tools described above under false assumptions:

overuse of icebreakers; appealing to the “professionalism” of the individuals; expecting norms to resolve differences; and depending on clear structures, agendas, protocols, and activities to counterbalance underlying dissatisfactions.

One of the most useful tools that my students and I have used to support our work in facilitating teams is the Team Performance Model developed by Drexler, Sibbet, and Forrester (2009). In this model, the developers

7 STAGES OF THE TEAM PERFORMANCE MODEL

1. **Orientation:** Why am I here?
2. **Trust building:** Who are you?
3. **Goal clarification:** What are we doing here?
4. **Commitment:** How will we do it?
5. **Implementation:** Who does what, when, where?
6. **High performance:** Wow!
7. **Renewal:** Why continue?

Source: Drexler, Sibbet, & Forrester, 2009.

identify seven stages that describe a team’s evolution from formation through task completion and renewal. With respect to the issues identified in this article, the first two stages of the Team Performance Model are especially relevant. In the remainder of this piece, I describe these stages with a focus on what happens when issues are unresolved for team members. Following each of these descriptions are suggestions for facilitators.

MOVING FROM GROUP TO TEAM Stage 1: Orientation.

In the orientation stage, team members are coming together to learn about the project or initiative that it will undertake. Typically, members do not have work history with everyone on the team and may not even be sure what the project is about. In this stage, the primary concern of the members is, “Why am I here?” The emphasis at this stage is on both the team’s purpose as well as the “I” part of the question: Why was this team formed, and why was I included? Assuming that the team’s purpose is made clear, members ponder whether

and how they fit the group and the purpose. If a group member is not satisfied that she or he has a place on the team, the likely response, according to Drexler et al., is disorientation, uncertainty, and fear. Consider the following description:

Nominal members who are misfits lacking any purposeful way to relate to others are disconnected from the group. They tend to focus on this lack of connection, making others feel uncomfortable. The internal conflict experienced by these marginal persons expresses itself in various dysfunctional ways. They may become withdrawn or distant from the group, or offer unsolicited criticism, never finding much value in

the team’s work (Drexler et al., 2009, p. 8).

When the orientation stage is resolved, the group is on its way to becoming a team. Members begin thinking in terms of “us,” they identify with the purpose, and they begin to imagine what the team could achieve.

For the facilitator, achieving resolution at this stage involves:

- **Making explicit the team’s purpose and the reasons behind the membership.** An essential piece of explicating purpose is doing so without articulating an overly specific goal. “We are here to discuss ways that we can improve reading comprehension for our second language learners” will work much better than, “We are here to analyze comprehension data for our second language learners and design specific interventions consistent with adopted texts.” The key is to allow the team to arrive at specific goals that address the purpose.
- **Engaging individuals in articulating what essential knowledge, skills, history, etc., that each**

Groups need to examine and resolve core relational and operational questions before they can work together effectively.

brings to the team. To share in the purpose of a team effort, each individual must believe that he or she has a meaningful role to play. Prompting members to identify what they believe are relevant knowledge, skills, and experience and then to surface the strengths and unique perspectives of each individual helps create the connection to purpose and the sense that “I belong here.”

- **Supporting individuals in imagining the power of “we,” helping members envision possibility and shared purpose.** The power of teams resides in the synergy of the collective. Thus, involving individuals at the orientation stage in tapping into their individual and collective ideas about what is possible, imagining what success would look like, and exploring outside-the-box choices can create both enthusiasm and commitment to the future of the team.

Stage 2: Trust building.

Virtually every facilitator understands that trust is a necessary ingredient for team performance. Because teams are interdependent, members must be able to relinquish full control and rely on others. If we stop to think about the people in our lives whom we trust, we quickly realize that such trust is developed experientially over time, through a deepening knowledge of the other person. To some extent, then, the development of trust is part and parcel of teams’ ongoing work.

At the beginning stages of team development, the issue of trust can be captured by the question, “Who are you?” Without some resolution of this question, a lack of trust can translate into team members being cautious with each other, perhaps maintaining

a façade, and not being forthright. When mistrust results in members not feeling free to speak their truth, the dynamics of the group are shaped by hidden agendas, unwillingness to voice issues of importance, and lack of integrity. All of these will impede both the authenticity of the work and the level of cooperation and collaboration among team members.

Resolving the trust-building stage requires that facilitators:

- **Model forthrightness, honesty, and integrity; be completely trustworthy themselves.** Essential to this stance are the concepts of transparency and forthrightness. Team members must be assured that the process is an open one and that any constraints, boundaries, or limitations are stated at the beginning of the work. Rather than keeping team members from dreaming, for example, presenting clear information about matters such as resources, timelines, expectations, and accountability help set parameters for the effort and convey the respect of the facilitator for the team’s capacity to work effectively under current circumstances. Similarly, team members must be assured that the facilitator is not doling out information selectively.
- **Create a safe environment for self-revelation; protect unpopular opinions; champion the marginalized.** Skilled facilitators are able to engage team members in increasingly courageous conversation. Neutrality is essential here, as is a willingness to ensure that the voice of each member receives equitable attention, respect, and consideration. It is especially important not to dismiss the voice of a lone individual whose thinking differs from the rest of the group. Rather, the facilitator wants to support that individual in articulating ideas, to check that

others in the group understand the person’s reasoning and/or feelings, and to make sure that the group does not move forward with an option that is unacceptable to anyone. (Note: This means avoiding votes and majority rule as a decision-making strategy. See Kaner, Lind, Toldi, Fisk, & Berger’s *Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making* (2007) for specific ideas about negotiating decisions.)

- **Engage participants in learning more about each other’s history, perspective, needs, individual priorities, and work styles.** One of the most insidious challenges to trust is the situation in which individuals make assumptions about others: “She’s African-American, so she must know best how to work with our African-American students”; “He teaches P.E., so he must not understand the importance of academic standards”; “She’s been in charge of grant oversight for the past five years, so she must have answers for us.” At best, such assumptions cause misunderstandings and perhaps some embarrassment that could be avoided by asking rather than assuming. At worst, such assumptions represent biases, prejudices, and intolerance that poison the possibility of trust.

CONCLUSION

School-based learning depends on teachers’ capacity to engage with each other around central issues of teaching and learning. While such collaboration is readily welcomed by some educators, others remain wedded to an “independent contractor” concept of teaching. Supporting teachers to view themselves as team members and to perform effectively as a team demands more of leaders than simply establishing structures and identifying tasks. Even assuming positive intent

Each individual must believe that he or she has a meaningful role to play.

on the part of the participants, the journey from a group to a team can be daunting. Without skillful facilitation, groups are likely to encounter personal dynamics that not only provide unanticipated challenges but may also serve as deal breakers in becoming a high-performing team. An experienced, astute facilitator who models interpersonal skills and dispositions needed for effective team work can make the difference between a group that remains a collectivity of individuals and one that forges the bonds of cohesiveness and trust that allow great things to happen.

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DEEPLY embedded, fully COMMITTED

Leaders transform Washington district into a professional learning community

BY ROBERT EAKER AND JANEL KEATING

In recent years, educators have noted the critical role district leadership plays in school improvement efforts. Researchers such as Lezotte (2001), Shannon and Bylsma (2004), Waters and Marzano (2006), as well as the National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform (Appelbaum, 2002) have focused attention on the need for a new way to lead schools. While district leadership is a critical factor in all areas of schooling, it is particularly important in adult learning. Simply put, student learning is positively affected by the quality of adult professional learning, and the quality of professional learn-

ing within school districts must not be left to chance.

Coinciding with the increased focus on district leadership, the concept of schools functioning as professional learning communities has swept across North America. Rarely has there been such widespread agreement among researchers and practitioners alike about the most promising way to significantly improve schools.

In 2006, the White River School District in Buckley, Wash., made the strategic decision to use the assumptions and practices of a professional learning community in a systematic and sustained effort to improve student learning.

ALL ABOUT THE LEARNING

The first big idea of a professional learning community is the recognition that the fundamental purpose of schools is to ensure high levels of learning for all students and adults (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). In White River, this meant that the central administration must accept the responsibility of shifting the district culture from one in which the emphasis was on ensuring that the curriculum was taught to one in which the emphasis was on ensuring that everyone, students and adults, learned.

Few would oppose the notion that school districts' primary focus should be on learning. The challenge facing

district leaders in White River was to move beyond mere slogans and embed the learning mission deep into the district's daily culture. Importantly, they began this process by asking, "What would a learning mission for all students and adults look like in this district if we really meant it?"

White River recognized that if they "really meant it," they must focus on changing the behavior of adults in the district. The district embraced the assumptions that adult behavior can best be impacted by deep learning and that the goal of deep learning can best be accomplished by doing the work of a professional learning community.

LEARNING BY DOING: JOB-EMBEDDED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

There is a lot of common sense in the notion that we learn best by doing, yet many schools and districts seek to "train" their way to significant school improvement. In addressing the question of how organizations can best close the gap between what they know and what they do, Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) offer this rather simple prescription, "The answer to the knowing-doing problem is deceptively simple: Embed more of the process of acquiring new knowledge in the actual doing of the task and less in the formal training programs that are frequently ineffective. If you do it, then you will know it" (p. 27).

Numerous researchers and practitioners have endorsed the efficacy of adult learning by doing. DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008) summarized these findings by observing, "The message is consistent and clear. The best professional development

White River School District Buckley, Wash.

Number of schools: 7

Enrollment: 4,360

Staff: 505

Racial/ethnic mix:

White: 88.6%

Black: 0.8%

Hispanic: 4.6%

Asian/Pacific Islander: 1.8%

Native American: 1.8%

Other: 2.4%

Limited English proficient: 8%

Languages spoken: Spanish, German, Turkish, Mandarin Chinese, Tagalog

Free/reduced lunch: 27.2%

Special education: 13.9%

Contact: Janel Keating, deputy superintendent

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occurs in a social and collaborative setting rather than in isolation, is ongoing and sustained rather than infrequent and transitory, is job-embedded rather than external, occurs in the context of the real work of the school and classroom rather than in off-site workshops and courses, focuses on results (that is, evidence of improved student learning) rather than activities or perceptions, and is systematically aligned with school and district goals rather than random. In short, the best professional development takes place in professional learning communities" (p. 370).

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY: IT'S JUST A BIGGER CLASSROOM

Embedding a districtwide learning culture for students and adults in a professional learning community requires asking fundamentally different questions. The first obvious question is: "What is essential that we

expect students to learn in each subject, grade level, or course?" White River ensured that collaborative teams in each school engaged in processes designed to clarify the essential outcomes for each grade, subject, or course. Teams did not have license to disregard state and district curriculum frameworks. Instead, teams became students of the curriculum by collaboratively clarifying what each standard meant, as well as its relative importance. This enabled teams to develop common pacing guides, ensuring that the essential outcomes would be allotted an appropriate amount of time within the academic year.

The same way of thinking about collaboratively clarifying the learning expectations for students was mirrored in the process of focusing on adult learning. In White River, the decision about what should be the focus of professional learning is based on information that flows from the work of collaborative teams and is chosen specifically to increase the capacity of teams and individual teachers to more effectively impact student learning.

This leads to the next critical question. If we know what we want students and adults to learn, how will we know if they have learned it? Most traditional school districts rely heavily on summative assessments. In professional learning communities, teacher teams collaboratively develop and use the results of common, formative assessments in order to assess each student's learning on a timely, ongoing basis. Importantly, White River realized that the power of common formative assessments lies in how they are used by collaborative teams. They recognized that data

The district embraced the assumptions that adult behavior can best be impacted by deep learning and that the goal of deep learning can best be accomplished by doing the work of a professional learning community.

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from common formative assessments would have little impact unless the information was used to inform individual teachers, as well as the entire team, about student learning, enabling teachers to reflect on the efficacy of their own professional practice.

Again, the district sought to view adult professional learning as if it were just a bigger classroom. Rather than wait until the end of the year to assess the effectiveness of professional learning in the district, the district asked: “If we know what we want adults to learn, how will we know if they have learned it, and how can we do this on a frequent and timely basis?”

The district sought to view adult professional learning as if it were just a bigger classroom.

Of course, knowing what students must learn and whether or not they have learned it will have little impact unless schools develop systematic plans to provide students with additional time and support when they experience difficulty in their learning, as well as enrichment when they demonstrate proficiency. DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many (2006) point out that “it is disingenuous for any school to claim its purpose is to help all students learn at high levels and then fail to create systems of interventions to give struggling learners additional time and support for learning” (p. 78). Thus, schools in White River created written plans for interventions and enrichment that were collaboratively developed, systematic, reflective of best practice, timely, and directive.

Providing additional time, support, and enrichment for adults was viewed as a critical aspect of district professional learning. Recognizing that adults, like students, learn at different rates and in different ways, White River approached professional learning through the framework of differentiat-

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THIS MAKE?

The White River bottom line is this: Are more students learning more, and are they learning at higher levels? The evidence is overwhelming. There are approximately 15 districts and 140 elementary schools in Pierce County, Wash.

Math and reading

White River students rank:

• 3rd-grade math	1st
• 3rd-grade reading	2nd
• 4th-grade math	2nd
• 4th-grade reading	1st
• 4th-grade writing	4th
• 5th-grade reading	3rd
• 5th-grade math	3rd

AP courses

Three years ago, only 60 students were taking Advanced Placement (AP) coursework at White River High School. During the 2009-10 school year, 430 class slots are filled by students taking AP coursework.

Washington Scholar Awards

The graduating class of 2009 had two Washington Scholar Award winners. This accomplishment is above the norm. Three students from each of the 147 legislative districts are chosen, based on grade point average and college entrance test scores.

ed teaming. That is, as with differentiated instruction in classrooms, team learning needs were individualized, addressing the learning needs of teachers and teams that emerged as they engaged in their work.

LEADING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: THE CHANGING ROLE OF PRINCIPALS

More than 30 years of research indicates that without effective principals, the disparate elements of effec-

tive schooling practices cannot be brought together or maintained (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 1991). White River recognized that the work of principals changes when schools function as professional learning communities, particularly in the area of professional learning.

White River worked from the assumption that it is a major responsibility of district leaders to enhance the capacity of collaborative teams — continually striving to increase the effectiveness of each team. Thus, White River worked to make sure that team members engaged in collaborative processes most likely to impact student learning: clarifying essential learning outcomes, frequently monitoring student learning, collaboratively analyzing student work, reflecting on their own professional practice, seeking out and experimenting with best practices, and providing students with additional time, support, and enrichment. They also recognized that the quality each of these critical components could be enhanced by deep, rich professional learning of adults.

The district effort to enhance the capacity of collaborative teams was based on a number of important assumptions. The most basic was the assumption that how well teams perform depends, to a great degree, on the quality of leadership, both of the principal and within teams.

Therefore, White River collaboratively developed a written description of the responsibilities of a team leader, including the responsibility to provide leadership for the team’s professional learning. Equally important was the assumption that the relationship between team leaders and principals must be clearly defined. Team leaders should be viewed by principals as the key link between administration and faculty.

Perhaps most important was the assumption that the work of the prin-

principal learning teams at the district level should precede and mirror the work of the learning leadership teams in each school and that this work should focus explicitly on the work that is expected of individual collaborative teams. Practicing and rehearsing the work with principals as a group, followed by principals and team leaders practicing and rehearsing prior to asking teacher teams to engage in the work, has proven to be a highly successful model of professional learning by doing.

NEW SYSTEMS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

White River realized that, just as with students, adult professional learning required new systems of accountability. DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008) observe, "... schools will not know whether or not all students are learning unless educators are hungry for evidence that students are

acquiring the knowledge, skills, and dispositions deemed essential to their success. Schools must systematically monitor student learning on an ongoing basis and use evidence of results to respond immediately to students who experience difficulty, to inform individual and collective practice, and to fuel continuous improvement" (pp. 18-19). The same can be said for districtwide professional learning.

White River has been passionate in its efforts to shift the culture from one in which "good intentions" and "working hard" were viewed as being synonymous with effectiveness. Thus, mirroring the work of classrooms, the district focused attention on the questions, "What have been the results of professional learning in the district?" and "How do we know?"

To develop accountability, White River chose to confront the disconnect that often exists in districts

between what is expected and the quality of work that is ultimately accepted (Eaker & Keating, 2008). The expectations-acceptance gap has been particularly prevalent in professional learning. White River clarified standards that represented high-quality work and insisted that the work meet the standards, even if it meant work must be redone.

Developing accountability and closing the gap between expectations and acceptance required more than simply being clear about the results expected from professional learning. To outline the quality expected from the learning, White River determined standards through a collaborative process. These standards improved the quality of work and provided a rationale for redoing work until it met the standard.

When work does not meet the standard, it is not unusual to hear,

“We need to work together to make this better. After all, here is the standard that we all agreed upon.”

WHAT WHITE RIVER HAS LEARNED

While school districts will have unique experiences as they undertake new approaches to districtwide professional learning, there are some things White River has learned that tend to be universal.

• **Professional learning by invitation will not work.** For collabora-

tive teams to be successful, professional learning must be embedded into the structure and routine practices of the district, team by team.

• **You must establish the “why.”**

When educators are introduced to change, there is a tendency to respond by thinking, “This is just one more thing to do on top of everything else.” White River has approached this problem by redefining the fundamental work that educators are asked to do. Instead of viewing their work in collaborative teams as being “just one

more thing,” faculty and staff have begun to understand that this is their work.

• **Professional learning must be embedded into the routine work of principal and teacher teams.** It is unreasonable to think that faculty and staff will engage in learning by doing unless they are given time to do so. In most schools, this means that leadership must be willing to build regularly scheduled time for teams to meet into the school schedule.

• **Change the fundamental ques-**

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1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, and counter sales (not mailed)	None	None
2. Paid or requested mail subscriptions (include advertisers proof copies and exchange copies)	11,520	12,570
c. Total paid and/or requested circulation	11,520	12,570
d. Free distribution by mail	1,875	2,106
e. Free distribution outside the mail	None	None
f. Total free distribution	1,875	2,106
g. Total distribution	11,520	12,570
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tions. Critical questions related to adult professional learning mirror the questions that affect student learning: What do we want them to know? How will we know if they know it? How will we respond if they experience difficulty with their learning (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006)?

- **Professional learning must be monitored and must meet previously collaboratively agreed upon standards of quality.** Many traditional schools have developed a culture in which the work and, thus, adult professional learning are simply accepted, regardless of the quality and with quality rarely being collaboratively defined.

In a professional learning community, the work and professional learning of teams are regularly monitored and teams share their work and learning with one another.

- **The quality of professional learning within principal teams impacts the quality of professional learning in teacher teams.** Teachers are not the only educators who work and learn in a culture of isolation. Recognizing that in many ways a school district is just a bigger school, White River organized principals into collaborative teams. By learning together to build shared knowledge, share ideas, and collaboratively analyze results, principal teams drive the work and professional learning of teacher teams.

- **Universal happiness is not the goal.** Any number of reasons will emerge as to why administrators, faculty, and staff should not work and learn together. While these reasons must be recognized and understood, they do not have to be accepted. White River learned the importance of sending the clear twin messages that 1) the fundamental purpose of the district is to ensure high levels of student learning, and 2) we have organized into collaborative teams to

work and learn together to achieve that purpose. There is no equivocation, and there are no exceptions.

- **Use data to influence attitudes.** Few things influence attitudes as much as success. When schools demonstrate even small, incremental improvements in student learning — especially as a result of adult learning — it becomes increasingly difficult to argue with the impact of professional learning.

- **Commitment follows experience — it doesn't precede it.** White River recognizes that commitment only comes after experience. Hence, White River leaders focused first on providing faculty and staff with high-quality, successful experiences that demonstrate a positive impact on student learning.

- **Get started, then get better.** There are those who want to wait until conditions are just right before beginning the journey of cultural change. The time is never right. Districts must organize into collaborative teams, begin the work, and learn together to make a passionate commitment to continually get better.

- **The positive impact of professional learning and must be recognized and celebrated.** Terrence Deal and Allan Kennedy, in *Corporate Cultures* (1982), observe that in the absence of rituals and ceremonies, important values will lose all meaning. If district leaders value professional learning and the work of collaborative teams, then the work and subsequent professional learning of teams must be openly recognized and their work celebrated.

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TACKLING RESISTANCE

Turn what could be a very bad day into a very good opportunity

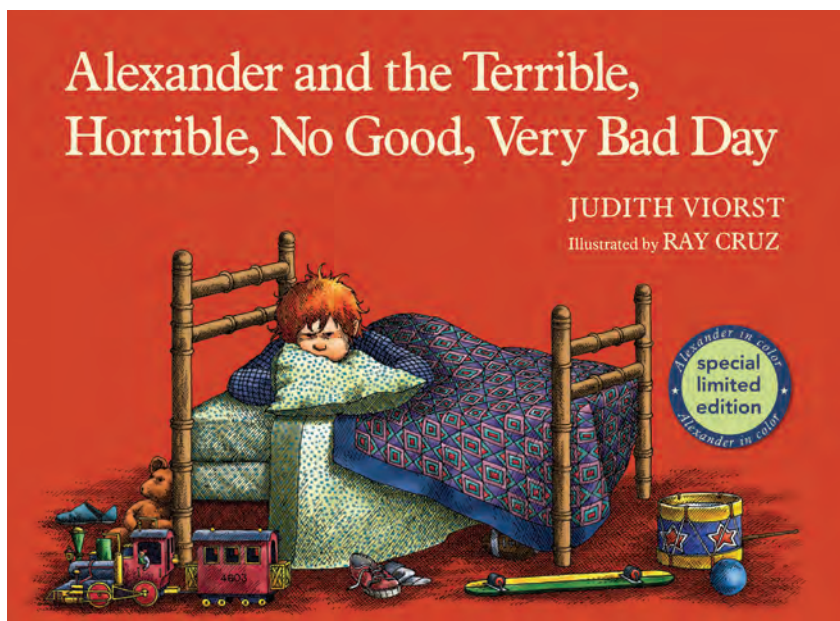
BY ANNEMARIE B. JAY

The time-honored children's story *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* (Viorst, 1972) is a prime example of someone having the kind of day we'd all like to avoid. Having a bad day, an Alexander day, can happen to anyone — even a dedicated literacy coach. An important component of coaching is building collaborative working relationships between the coach and teachers (Burkins, 2007; Knight, 2007; Toll, 2007). When views about instructional practices are similar, positive relationships may develop quickly, but what happens when resistance is stronger than identifiable differences? A coach may find herself experiencing an Alexander day with a noncompliant teacher.

A coach may experience an Alexander day with a noncompliant teacher.

There are many elements critical to creating an effective coach-teacher relationship. A school should have a shared vision for a particular improvement initiative, a common understanding of coaches' roles in that initiative, and a cadre of skilled, respected coaches.

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Even when all of the elements are in place, coaches will find that teachers are sometimes resistant. Fortunately, there are strategies for addressing the resistant teacher.

VALUING THE LITERACY COACH

A literacy coach is “a reading specialist recognized as an expert teacher by peers and superiors whose main function is to provide professional development to teachers in both one-to-one and group venues with the goal of improving literacy instruction” (Jay & Strong, 2008, p. 3). Literacy coaching is both challenging and rewarding, but not magical. Achieving positive results takes time, effort,

strong foundational knowledge, and good people skills.

Schools fortunate enough to have a literacy coach on staff find that the coach and most classroom teachers build collaborative, collegial relationships over time.

Working together, coaches and teachers discover successful methods for meeting instructional challenges (Knight, 2007).

Unfortunately, not all teachers are eager to participate in professional development or have a coach visit their classrooms. Teachers who persistently exhibit one or both of these characteristics may be professionally noncompliant in either an obvious or

covert way when asked to work with a literacy coach.

TYPES OF NONCOMPLIANCE

There are two types of noncompliance: obvious and covert. Obvious noncompliance is evident when a teacher is outwardly resistant to the coach through verbal or written messages to the coach, by exhibiting negative body language during meetings facilitated by the coach, or by making condescending comments about the coach or coaching to others.

Covert noncompliance is often difficult to detect, even though resistance may be strong. Teachers who exhibit covert noncompliance make excuses for not following through on implementing the techniques or programs shared in professional development, not inviting the coach to visit the classroom, and not being able to provide data about trial applications of strategies or programs in their own classrooms.

Teachers may exhibit either type of noncompliance for a variety of reasons, including discomfort or an attitude of intransigence.

DISCOMFORT

A teacher's discomfort may be caused by a lack of knowledge of why the coach is in the classroom. Some teachers assume that coaches want to visit their classrooms to "right the wrongs" — that is, to change those long-term instructional practices teachers have been using and that students have enjoyed. Feeling that one's instructional efforts may have been misguided would evoke strong feelings of anxiety and discomfort in most of us. Interactions between the coach and teacher must be based on trust, and must never be pejorative or condescending.

In addition, coaches need to be sensitive to the "dilemmas, fears, and celebrations" (Feger, Woleck, & Hickman, 2004, p. 15) of their fellow

teachers. Coaches need to be aware that misassumptions may color teachers' reactions to being observed by a coach. "This coach-sponsored classroom observation is the highest test of trust between the teacher and the coach. The coach is serving as a 'critical friend' for the teacher and is not assuming the role of evaluator in any way" (Bukowiecki, 2007, p. 13). Coaches who begin classroom visits by doing the teaching rather than observing may alleviate teachers' discomfort while simultaneously providing the foundation for a collaborative relationship.

Fear of change is another cause of discomfort for teachers. When schools adopt new instructional programs, coaches are often assigned to help teachers implement the programs. The implementation of a brief timeline to institute a change may cause added stress for teachers who are uncomfortable with the change in the first place (Jay & Strong, 2008).

Another reason for teachers' discomfort with coaching is a lack of understanding of exactly what the coach's role responsibilities are relative to their own. Teachers who have this type of discomfort are typically uncertain about how the literacy coach may impact them directly. If teachers feel uncertainty about coaching in their classrooms after the concept has been introduced in their school, the coach should make every effort to meet with individual teachers before visiting their classrooms. Telling the teacher specifically what will be demonstrated or watched during a classroom visitation in a clear, concise manner will help alleviate discomfort. Inviting the teacher to offer suggestions about what the coach might focus on during the visit also helps to form a collegial teacher-coach partnership. According to Jay and Strong (2008), regardless of the source of a teacher's discomfort, it is important for the coach to maintain a supportive stance. This ongoing

support may help the teacher transition from discomfort to comfort.

A fourth type of discomfort occurs when the teacher struggles with instructional delivery, whether because of student behaviors, time management issues, or a superficial approach to instruction. Any of these situations may make teachers feel uneasy when a visitor is expected in the classroom. Teachers want to feel — and show — the seamless flow of their craft, not a disjointed demonstration. An observant coach can aptly assist teachers through the reflection process by sharing verbal and written comments about observed instruction in a post-visitation conversation. An effective literacy coach can competently and collaboratively address any of these areas with a struggling teacher.

INTRANSIGENCE

Respecting resistance can be a powerful means of reflecting on our own beliefs and practices (Fullan, 2001). Literacy coaches' strong foundational knowledge shapes their beliefs and enables them to respect resistance and to meet that resistance appropriately. However, noncompliance is more than resistance when it is defined by an intransigent attitude of refusal or defiance. Low self-efficacy, philosophical differences with the literacy coach or others, or low expectations for students may foster such an attitude (McKenna & Walpole, 2008).

Noncompliant teachers with an intransigent attitude are adept at avoiding opportunities to work with the coach. According to Jay and Strong (2008), a teacher's intransigence may be caused by one of the following attitudes: thinking he is too busy, thinking that nothing the coach can show him is really new, or think-

A teacher's discomfort may be caused by a lack of knowledge of why the coach is in the classroom.

ing that he is an independent contractor in the classroom. Dispelling these attitudes is not an easy task for the coach when the teacher's strong refusal to comply is persistent.

An intransigent attitude may surface when the teacher believes that the coach is taking on an evaluative or judgmental role. It is extremely important for the coach to guarantee the teacher that what is observed in the classroom and spoken between them will remain with them alone. Of course, this should be the case between the coach and any teacher, but those who are especially anxious over coaching need additional reassurance.

VALUING THE TEACHER

Building and sustaining relationships takes time, effort, and self-reflection. Toll (2005) reminds us that "when we listen and learn from resisters, the conversation is richer, the differences often are blurred, and we usually honor one another as people and teachers even if we still disagree" (p. 122).

Coaches who inherently value each teacher are often valued themselves. The goal of a collaborative working relationship between a coach and teachers is to provide "the opportunity for reciprocity of gifts of knowledge and skill, caring and support, feedback and celebration" (Burkins, 2007, p. 125).

WHAT THE LITERACY COACH CAN DO

Literacy coaches need to develop an action plan for working with the noncompliant teacher. The following suggestions may help the coach establish a more positive relationship:

1. **Teach first and observe the teacher later.** This may help the teacher avoid feeling professionally or personally scrutinized.
2. **Revisit classrooms briefly and informally** and make positive

comments about the learning environment.

3. **Face resistance through open, honest conversations with teachers.** Casey (2006) reminds us that the coach does not have to have a pat, right answer to every question or problem posed by teachers. Collegial conversations about instructional challenges between the coach and a strongly resistant teacher may be beneficial to the professional growth of both.
4. **Engage in professional development and networking.** Many books and articles written about coaching in the last five years are good resources for coaches. Talking about methodology, time management, and generalizable noncompliance issues with other coaches can also strengthen one's coaching repertoire.
5. **Talk with teachers often.** Coaches are colleagues of classroom teachers, and sharing the desire to assist them with their multifaceted roles should help garner support for collegial coaching. Resistant teachers may need more one-on-one contact with the coach before as well as after individual coaching sessions.

The coach must develop an action plan to handle working with a noncompliant teacher. It is important for the coach to value each teacher as an individual professional and as part of the overall instructional team of the school. When the coach is accurately aware of the reasons a teacher may be noncompliant and is also sensitive to the individual teacher's personal beliefs and professional history, the coach should be able to determine whether an action plan would be better implemented one-on-one with the teacher or in a small group with others with whom that teacher is comfortable. Once the coach and teacher have worked through an action plan for establishing a more productive

relationship, they can work effectively toward their shared goals for improved teaching and learning for students. Assisting noncompliant teachers to comfortably embrace coaching helps both teachers and coaches avoid Alexander days.

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ADDRESSING CONCERNS ABOUT CHANGE

In the 1970s, education researchers inspired a fundamental shift in how educators perceive the effect a change initiative will have on those in schools. The Concerns-Based Adoption Model outlines seven stages of concern as a way to understand educators' common concerns about change. The same researchers proposed strategies school leaders could use to support educators progressing through a change initiative.



To help bring about change, you first must know an individual's concerns. While there are no set formulas for supporting educators, here are some suggestions for addressing the stages of concern.

STAGE 0: Awareness concerns

Aware that an innovation is being introduced but not really interested or concerned with it.

- If possible, involve teachers in discussions and decisions about the innovation and its implementation.
- Share enough information to arouse interest, but not so much that it overwhelms.
- Acknowledge that a lack of awareness is expected and reasonable and that there are no foolish questions.

STAGE 1: Informational concerns

Interested in some information about the change.

- Provide clear and accurate information about the innovation.
- Use several ways to share information — verbally, in writing, and through available media.
- Communicate with large and small groups and individuals.
- Help teachers see how the innovation relates to their current practices — the similarities and the differences.

STAGE 2: Personal concerns

Wants to know the personal impact of the change.

- Legitimize the existence and expression of personal concerns.
- Use personal notes and conversations to provide encouragement and reinforce personal adequacy.

- Connect these teachers with others whose personal concerns have diminished and who will be supportive.

STAGE 3: Management concerns

Concerned about how the change will be managed in practice.

- Clarify the steps and components of the innovation.
- Provide answers that address the small, specific how-to issues.
- Demonstrate exact and practical solutions to the logistical problems that contribute to these concerns.

STAGE 4: Consequence concerns

Interested in the impact on students or the school.

- Provide individuals with opportunities to visit other settings where the innovation is in use and to attend conferences on the topic.
- Make sure these teachers are not overlooked. Give positive feedback and needed support.
- Find opportunities for these teachers to share their skills with others.

STAGE 5: Collaboration concerns

Interested in working with colleagues to make the change effective.

- Provide opportunities to develop skills for working collaboratively.
- Bring together, from inside and outside the school, those who are interested in working collaboratively.
- Use these teachers to assist others.

STAGE 6: Refocusing concerns

Begins refining the innovation to improve student learning results.

- Respect and encourage the interest these individuals have for finding a better way.
- Help these teachers channel their ideas and energies productively.
- Help these teachers access the resources they need to refine their ideas and put them into practice.

Source: *Taking Charge of Change*, by Shirley Hord, William Rutherford, Leslie Huling-Austin, and Gene Hall. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 1987.

SHARPEN YOUR MESSAGE WITH A LASER TALK

In the late 1990s, the NSDC Board of Trustees and staff established influencing policy and policy makers at the local, state, and national levels as an organizational priority. As part of this process, we examined the policy-influencing practices of other organizations, both within and beyond the field of education. During our research, we were introduced to an organization called Results, an advocacy organization that seeks to eliminate the devastating impact of poverty. Results members are committed to a world where all people have a fair chance at success.

The organization's mission is "to create the public and political will to end poverty by empowering individuals to exercise their personal and political power for change." Its theory of change combines the voices of passionate grassroots activists with strategic efforts to influence federal decision makers to leverage millions of dollars for programs and improved policies that give low-income people the health, education, and opportunity they need to thrive (see www.results.org).

Results is successful because of its committed and well-prepared core of volunteers. They convene regularly to study, strategize, and plan their next actions. While I am not an active member of Results, I have benefited from its research and many of the strategies it uses to advance its agenda. I view one particular tool, the laser talk, as having significant value for educators. In this issue of *JSD*, we highlight foundational concepts rather than content and processes of our field. I view the laser talk as an essential process for advancing effective professional learning so that all educators and students learn and perform at high levels.

A laser talk, sometimes called an elevator speech, is a short and compelling message designed to influence another person's actions. This strategy offers an approach for organizing a message when time is limited and the speaker intends to make a request of the listener.

I have used laser talks at school board meetings, in meetings with elected officials, as the opening and closing of speeches to large groups, sitting next to a congressperson on a plane, and in meetings with committees. Results helps its volunteers remember the four components of a

laser talk by using the mnemonic EPIC: engage, problem, inform, call to action.

STEP-BY-STEP

1. In the first step, consider how you will **engage** a group or an individual listener. The goal is to get your listener's attention with a dramatic fact or short statement. Another option is to thank the individual for a specific action or contribution in the past.
2. Next, present the **problem**. Support the statement of the problem with facts, anecdotes, and details. If possible, appeal to the listener's emotions and interests. If the problem is satisfactorily established, your listener will be interested in your ideas on how to help.
3. The next step is to **inform** the listener(s) of the proposed solution. If possible, provide examples of where the solution has already implemented effectively.

Results volunteers know that conversations typically end at this point because speakers have failed to think specifically about what they want from their listeners or are uncomfortable in making a request.

4. Results volunteers practice seeing their talks through the final step, the **call to action**, when the speaker makes a specific request of the listener. An appropriate request includes a specific action within the sphere of influence of the listener and a date by which the speaker can hear about the outcome.

The laser talk offers me an effective way to think about what I want to accomplish by identifying the problem to address, considering what I want others to know about it, determining a solution to share, and selecting the help and specific actions I want from others.

THE LASER TALK IN ACTION

Here I offer a laser talk with annotations. And you — my listeners, or, in this case, readers — will let me know if I have been effective.

Engage: One of our most respected educational leaders, Phil Schlechty, states: "If you don't have time to read, you don't have time to lead." The foundation of our organization is based on the assumption that educators must continue to learn and grow in order to improve performance.

A short and powerful quote from a respected leader is one



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.nsd.org.

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way to grab your listener's attention and draw him or her into your topic.

Problem: In my view, reading is an essential component of any continuous improvement strategy. And yet I hear too many educators say they don't have time to read. Organization and school leaders tell me they feel woefully behind in their knowledge of new research and findings in their fields. Some tell stories of how they stack their journals — or add bookmarks to their web browser — in the “to-read” file and never get to the bottom. Others express guilt at the idea of reading a journal, newspaper, book, or article during the workday.

This concerns me because these same educators are in positions of leadership and authority. They make professional development decisions without knowing about all possible options. I believe their decisions would be stronger

if these leaders were informed by research and best practices. When these decisions result in less effective professional development, our practice can flounder, our results suffer, and our critics celebrate.

A personal perspective on the problem is more engaging than a mere statement of facts and figures, but you also need real-life evidence that people believe. Your problem statement will be more effective if at least some of your evidence matches the day-to-day experiences of your listeners — in this example, what professionals wouldn't understand the challenge of an overflowing to-read file?

Inform: We know today that students will not successfully learn math if their math teacher does not have a deep understanding of the subject matter. The same holds true for district and school leaders. They cannot implement more powerful professional learning for

adults if they do not understand the fundamentals of the continuous learning cycle. Any educator in a position to influence professional development decisions must have knowledge and understanding necessary to make critical decisions.

An increasing number of individuals in school systems hold some level of responsibility for professional learning. They may go by different titles: trustee, superintendent,

associate superintendent, director, consultant, coordinator, principal, coach, team leader, or teacher. They are all positioned to become professional development experts if they take time to invest in the knowledge base and experiences of the field. We need as many of these individuals as possible to offer the expertise and leadership that is essential to ensure effective professional learning for every educator so that every student achieves.

When you inform listeners about the solution to the problem, your credibility as the speaker is essential. They must know from earlier experience, your positional authority, or the facts you cite that your solution has the possibility of solving the problem. When you provide foundational knowledge, be prepared to back it up with research, readings, or additional resources.

Call to action: NSDC's purpose calls for every educator to engage in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves. We need your help in cultivating leaders and advocates who understand what it takes to fulfill this purpose. The first step in this process is convening colleagues who have demonstrated an interest in professional learning to become part of a study team that will serve as the organization's brain trust for professional development. Seek permission, if necessary, to organize such a team and determine whom to invite. Indicate to potential members the intention to form a group that is committed to staying current on the field's research and best practices so that others will seek their expertise when critical decisions about professional development are made.

Schedule your first session, and begin by reviewing this issue of *JSD*. Next, establish a list of books and seminal research studies you will examine together over the next year. Or decide whom you want to learn from and how you will do so. Capture your learning and record the decisions you believe you influence positively as a result of this effort. Let me know in six months if my assumption was accurate: Higher-quality decisions, and consequently practices, are in place because of this learning investment.

If you undertake this challenge, I am confident that, in addition to the many ways you will influence practice in your organization, you will see many opportunities for delivering laser talks. You will have the essential knowledge you need each time to engage, explain the problem, offer a solution, and describe how someone will help you solve it.

Give your listeners options in the call to action. Help them realize that they should take steps that build on what they already know and care about as part of their commitment to learning. While advocacy requires us to push ourselves beyond what may be comfortable, we are most effective when we use what we know and grow from there. ■

Visit

www.nsd.org/learningBlog/

So how did I do with my laser talk? Are you compelled to take action?

See this column on the blog, and please respond with the action you took.

In addition, look on the blog for other examples of laser talks that I will share in response to some of the common criticisms we face about professional development.

I look forward to reading how you are engaging others in building knowledge and skills to make better decisions. I will celebrate NSDC members as the most informed and committed advocates for high-quality professional development. And together we will take steps each day to advance NSDC's purpose.

— Stephanie Hirsh

IF YOU REALLY WANT TO CONNECT, TURN OFF THE AUTOMATIC PILOT

Every day, I get e-mails from Plaxo, LinkedIn, Facebook, Classmates, Twitter. No doubt you do, too. *So-and-so wants to connect with you.* I rarely know who so-and-so is or why they would want to connect with me. Is it so they can have a gazillion followers? Is this a contest? I'm not much of a follower, have grown weary of being followed, and am lousy at contests.

This morning, I got an e-mail announcing: "*You know 1,898 people that you haven't connected with yet. Here's the list of your contacts that you aren't connected with yet. Invite them to connect.*" The message used the word connect or connected three times in the 26-word admonition. I looked at the list. Apparently, @Home Billing and Amazon.com want to connect with me. So does the American Automobile Association. Who knew!

In my experience, many people I encounter wouldn't recognize an opportunity to truly connect with someone if it planted itself squarely in front of them. Or if they did recognize it heading their way, they'd turn tail and run. And in my view, not connecting is OK much of the time. No doubt the people using social networking web sites are very nice, but I'm already happily connected to plenty of people I care about. If I need something, I know how to find it, and if people need me, they know how to find me. I'm not hiding, and I'm always willing to lend a hand. So leave me alone.

If you want to become a great leader, a great teacher, a great principal, a great colleague, a great human being, you must gain the capacity to connect with the people who are central to your success and happiness — at a deep level — or lower your aim. The next frontier for exponential growth and the only sustainable competitive edge for individuals, organizations, and schools lie in the area of human connectivity.

So, what does "connect" mean, and why is it so important? I'll answer the second question first. Connection is important because people make decisions first for emo-

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tional reasons, second for rational. Daniel Kahneman, a Princeton psychologist, received the Nobel Prize for economics for this discovery. This is the human condition. Our most valuable currency is not money, nor is it IQ, multiple degrees, good looks, charisma, 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.

Our most valuable currency is relationships or emotional capital — in your case, with your fellow teachers, administrators, students, and parents. You may have smarts galore, but without emotional capital, your dreams and strategies will stall. And we acquire emotional capital by connecting at a deep level with those at the center of our lives. Yet, this level of connectivity is rare, perhaps because it requires transparency, vulnerability, full disclosure, intimacy. It requires practicing principle 3 of *Fierce Conversations*: **Be here, prepared to be nowhere else.** In *this* conversation with *this* colleague, *this* student, *this* parent (Scott, 2002).

I find this requires setting aside other matters and focusing on the conversation in front of you. For example, I've had a rough week, and it's only Wednesday. I lost the buyer of my house, discovered that my loan to buy a condo still hasn't been approved (I had planned to move in today), then a woman and I backed into each other in a parking lot and damaged the rear ends of our cars, and yesterday I learned that there is \$50,000 worth of work that must be done on my house in order to sell it. I don't have \$50K in my petty cash drawer.

Given all this, I'm fairly proud of the fact that I have remained upbeat, cordial, and most importantly, fully present with everyone who has needed to talk with me, even though it would be an understatement to say that I am stressed. As I write this article, I am with *you*. If you feel at all connected with me as you read this, it is in part because I am letting you "see" me, while at the same time, trying to see *you*. I'm hoping that, as a result of reading this, you will be inspired to connect with at least one person who is important to you, because that is what will advance your life and make you and others happy. All the rest is just noise and will pass, so put down whatever you are dragging into your conversations on your back. It will wait for you.

The problem, by the way, does not always lie in a lack of time together. Almost every busy parent has felt guilty



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

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about not spending enough time with his or her child. Most couples express concerns that they have not been spending as much time with their mates as they feel they should. Principals suspect that things would go more smoothly if they spent more time with the teachers in their schools. So we carve out the time, sometimes grudgingly.

A parent sits down to talk with a child. A couple gets a babysitter and goes out to dinner. A principal schedules a meeting with a teacher. What happens? Not much. Just space, stretching out uncomfortably in front of you. Many do not make it past, "How are you?" "I'm fine."

When people are not present, not really engaged, there are missed opportunities to talk about something interesting and worthwhile. However, while most people think the problem lies with others, what if there is something else at work here? What if *you're* the problem? What if you're so disengaged that nobody hears you, nobody really listens to you, nobody really responds to you?

Perhaps you're too polite. Or too self-conscious, self-absorbed, politically correct, or cautious. The net result? We succeed in hearing every word, but miss the message entirely.

Hearing people's words is only the beginning. There is a profound difference between having a title, a classroom, or a marriage and being someone to whom people commit at the deepest level. If we wish to accomplish great things in our schools, and in our lives, then we must come to terms with a basic human need: the longing to be known, and being known, to be loved.

When our conversations with others disregard this core need, our lives can seem like an ongoing, exhausting struggle to influence others to do what we want them to do, to rise to their potential, to accomplish the goals of the relationship. We persuade, cajole, manipulate, and issue directives. Unconsciously, we end our conversations as soon as we initiate them, too afraid of what we might say or hear. Consequently, nothing changes. There's little to celebrate. Relationships are on automatic pilot. The scenery is bor-

Connecting through conversation

- Come into the conversation with empty hands. Bring nothing but yourself.
- Set aside your own agenda and ask, "What is the most important thing we should be talking about today?"
- When you ask, *really* ask. One of the greatest gifts you can give another is the purity of your attention.
- Silence your cell phone. You cannot be here, prepared to be nowhere else, when you are interrupted by beeps, buzzes, and bells.
- Speak with and listen to others as your equals, because they are.
- If you're unclear about what someone means, ask them to say more.
- Resolve to get it right (whatever *it* is), rather than to *be* right.
- Look inside yourself — with some people you may have to dig deep — to find at least a modicum of genuine affection for the person(s) with whom you are talking.
- Get past "How are you?" "I'm fine, how are you?"
- Be kind. Everyone is carrying a heavy load.

ing, and the skid marks from heels dug in are visible across the floor.

Only when we genuinely see the people who are important to us can we hope to make the difference that matters to us most.

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PARENTS MAY NEED MORE SUPPORT BEFORE BECOMING ENGAGED IN SCHOOL

As educators, we have long understood that students benefit from strong home-school connections. In fact, more than 100 years ago, the National Parent Teacher Association was formed for the express purpose of strengthening the relationship between home and school. Initially, the home-school connection was commonly characterized as mothers volunteering in classrooms and supporting school activities.

Educators have begun to think of the home-school connection in broader terms. Educators understand that it is not only parents who support students, but also other family and community members. Educators also recognize that the home-school connection takes many forms and goes beyond parents volunteering in classrooms.

As we deepen our understanding of home-school connections, it is important that we consider how relationships between home and school are affected by the increasing cultural, linguistic, and economic diversity in our schools. In this column in the fall 2009 *JSD* (available online at www.nsd.org/news/jsd/), we wrote about parent involvement, which we define as the actions parents and families take at home and school to support the education of their children. We discussed how cultural, linguistic, and economic differences might affect the ways in which families are involved in school.

In this issue, we discuss parent engagement, a second kind of home-school connection. Parent engagement, also termed family engagement, encompasses parents and educators working together to meet the organizational goals of the school.

Parent engagement differs from parent involvement in that the focus of parent engagement is improving the educational experience for all students in the school, not just the parents' own children. Serving in formal governance groups, such as site-based decision-making committees and PTA, is an example of parent engagement.

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Formal governance groups play an important role in schools. Unfortunately, schools often struggle to get culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse parents involved in these kinds of groups. The limited participation of parents of diverse backgrounds is often mistakenly attributed to parents being too busy or unconcerned to be involved in these groups. We find there are two much more likely explanations.

1. SOME ARE NOT INVITED

First, some parents are rarely, if ever, asked to participate in these kinds of groups. Schools, of course, do solicit parent participation, but it may not reach parents of all backgrounds. A typical approach to seeking representatives for site-based committees or parent organizations is to send an announcement in the form of a flyer or mass e-mail. While some parents may respond to this type of communication, many will not.

When the school finds that the response to the communication is less than desired, the school will often make personal contacts. Because certain parents have established relationships with the school or are more convenient to access, there is a tendency for schools to call on them. These parents are often very similar to those who are likely to respond to the initial call for participation. This results in representation coming from a limited portion of the school community.

To increase the diversity of representation on formal governance groups, schools need to consciously reach out to culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse parents and invite them to participate. Personal contact sends a strong message that the school truly wants to engage parents. It is important to keep in mind that one contact may not be enough. If the school does not have an established relationship with a parent, several interactions may be necessary before the parent feels comfortable enough to accept the invitation.

2. THE STRUCTURE MAY BE UNFAMILIAR

A second reason that participation in formal governance groups may be limited for culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse parents is that the structure and operating procedures of these groups may be unfamiliar. Whereas some parents are used to working in organizations



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.nsd.org.



that have specific rules and policies, other parents may be more comfortable with organic or informal structures. Joining a group that is governed by strict policies and procedures may be intimidating. This is particularly true if the head of the group assumes that all members are familiar with the rules and procedures and provides little orientation for new members. Even when orientation is provided, it may be insufficient for parents who have never participated in this kind of formal structure.

One school we worked with wanted to increase the diversity of representation on its site-based decision-making committee. We helped the school develop a specific recruiting and orientation plan. Every teacher in the school nominated a culturally, linguistically, or economically diverse parent who had not previously participated in a school governance group. The teacher provided a brief paragraph that explained what assets the parent could bring to the school and any other information the teacher thought would be helpful in the recruiting process.

The school leadership team reviewed the nominations and selected 10 of the parents to pursue. The leadership team used a combination of home visits, phone calls, and personal notes to establish a relationship with each of the 10 parents. All of the parents were then invited to a meeting that was held at the home of one of the parents. At this meeting, the leadership team explained the purpose of the site-based decision-making committee and the role that parents played on the committee. The leadership team asked the parents to consider becoming members.

Several of the parents expressed interest in serving, but also indicated they had concerns about their ability to do so. They did not believe they had sufficient knowledge to provide guidance to the school on the kinds of important matters the site-based committee was charged with considering. The parents worried that they would waste time by asking too many questions. They also expressed concern about their ability to participate in meetings held in English when their primary language was Spanish. The leadership team asked the parents whether they would consider serving on the committee if the team could find a way to address their concerns. Eight of the parents agreed. The other two indicated they would be happy to assist, but could not commit the necessary time.

To address the parents' concerns, the school provided an in-depth orientation. The presentation and all of the materials were in Spanish. The parents had an opportunity to ask questions and to make suggestions about how the committee should function. At the end of this session, the parents indicated they wanted to serve, but still did not feel competent to do so. To address this concern, the leadership team met with the parent representatives before each site-based committee meeting. The leadership team reviewed

Parental support takes many shapes

In the fall 2009 issue of *JSD*, we wrote that parent support takes a variety of forms — involvement, engagement, and empowerment — and used that space to cover parent involvement.

If schools only recognize traditional forms of parent involvement, it is possible they will overlook the contributions of culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse parents. We have developed five categories that describe ways in which parents may be involved in their children's education.

Parenting: Some parents view the roles of schools and parents as distinct. The parents' job is to socialize the child, while the school's role is to educate. Schools may not recognize socialization that occurs at school — eating lunch with children — as involvement.

Communicating: When parents view the roles of school and home as distinct, they may not initiate contact with schools but will respond to communication or make themselves available as needed.

Demonstrating academic support: Many families work hard to ensure that their children have appropriate dress, space to study, and permission to skip household duties.

Declaring importance of education: Through their words and actions, families show how they value education even when they aren't able to assist with homework because of language differences.

Conveying trust by granting autonomy: While some may view parents' lack of involvement with course selection or college applications as a sign of not caring, parents may be signaling their trust that children can and should take responsibility for their own educations.

the agenda, explained the issues to be discussed, and allowed the parents to ask questions. This preview meeting helped the parents feel more confident about participating in the formal committee meetings.

One additional strategy the school employed was to alternate the language of the meeting. One month the meeting was held in English, with Spanish translation provided. The next month, the meeting was in Spanish with English translation. This sent a strong message that the school was also willing to adapt to the needs of the parents.

As diversity in schools grows, engaging parents of all backgrounds in school improvement becomes increasingly important. The key is to purposefully reach out to parents and to provide the support they need to participate. We might be surprised to learn how much we can increase parent engagement if we simply ask. ■



FROM THE **field**

A QUICK GLIMPSE AT RECENT RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

PRIORITIZING MATH AND SCIENCE

"The opportunity equation: Transforming mathematics and science education for citizenship and the global economy"

Carnegie Corporation of New York

Based on the belief that every student in every school deserves an excellent science and math education to be prepared for the future, this call to action outlines

four priority areas for moving math and science to a more prominent place in the educational system. The authors advise establishing high expectations for student achievement in these fields, both within schools and

districts and at a national level. Recommendations also include strengthening professional learning in these subjects. Specific strategies include increasing teachers' opportunities to experience powerful math and science learning themselves and partnerships with science institutions.

www.opportunityequation.org/TheOpportunityEquationExecSum.pdf



WHAT IS IT LIKE BEING A TEACHER?

"Teaching for a living: How teachers see the profession today"

Public Agenda, September 2009

This first in a series of three reports features nationwide survey data about how teachers describe their jobs, including their reasons for entering the field, what their students and teaching atmosphere are like, what challenges they face, and what suggestions they have for improvements. Three distinct groups of teachers are identified — the disheartened, the contented, and the idealists — and the categories are used to explore policy implications for supporting and retaining the most effective educators. Following up on earlier studies, this study also includes questions about differences between Gen Y teachers and older educators. www.publicagenda.org/pages/teaching-for-a-living

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

"Research findings to support effective educational policymaking: Evidence & action steps for state, district & local policymakers"

The Wallace Foundation, September 2009

Using research findings and case studies, this brief report offers recommendations for reforming public education at the local, district, and state levels. Action plans emphasize the role of district leaders and principals in improving schools' performances, in addition to coordinating district and state policies and expanding out-of-school learning. Principals in particular are identified as key players in turning around low-performing schools. Investments in principals — support, training, timely and relevant data, and time to devote to improving instruction and learning — are found to be highly cost-effective and critical to attracting and keeping high-quality teachers.

www.wallacefoundation.org/Documents/Research-Findings-Action-Items-to-Support-Effective-Educational-Policymaking.pdf

RETAINING NEW TEACHERS

"A teacher development continuum: The role of policy in creating a supportive pathway into the profession"

New Teacher Center, June 2009

Given that research consistently shows a positive relationship between a teacher's number of years in the field and his or her students' achievement levels, how can new teachers best be supported to become more effective more quickly? This policy brief explores ways to assist new educators through ongoing, on-the-job support throughout the induction period and beyond. As many new teachers are employed in urban and challenging schools, developing their knowledge and skills — and retaining them — has clear implications for their students' and schools' success. The brief identifies promising models of higher education partnerships and state policies and ends with several specific recommendations for states and higher education institutions.

www.teachersforanewera.org/act_sendfile.cfm?fileid=89



STAFFING INNOVATIONS

"Toward the structural transformation of schools: Innovations in staffing"

Learning Point Associates, August 2009

A structural transformation of education must start with a reassessment of the ways in which teachers are trained, recruited, inducted, and supported. As schools explore and rethink teachers' roles and job descriptions, they must have flexibility to innovate. A differentiated staffing model would move teachers away from being generalists toward more specialized roles, with individual teachers focusing on particular aspects of a student's education and working with a team of colleagues to meet defined, assessable objectives. In addition, this model recognizes that teachers travel on a career continuum even when they choose to remain in the classroom.

www.learningpt.org/expertise/educatorquality/resources/publications/InnovationsInStaffing.pdf

IMPROVING INSTRUCTION WITH DATA

"Using student achievement data to support instructional decision making"

What Works Clearinghouse, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, September 2009

This practice guide provides K-12 teachers, school administrators, and district leaders with a framework for applying assessment data to instructional decisions.



Because no single data source can provide a full picture, the guide emphasizes integrating multiple sources. By studying data from a variety of routine, consistent tests, educators can better monitor student progress and identify individual students' strengths and weaknesses, allowing them to prioritize their instructional time and methods accordingly. Five

recommendations address the use of data at the classroom, school, and district levels. The report acknowledges that a data-informed school and a district culture are necessary supports to effective data use.

http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/dddm_pg_092909.pdf

WHAT IS FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT?

"Today's middle level educator"

National Middle School Association

Two 20-minute podcasts contain a two-part discussion about the culture and myths of formative assessment. A process used by teachers and students alike during regular daily instruction, formative assessment provides ongoing feedback to improve student learning and teacher instruction. It places students, rather than teachers, at the center, helping them to become engaged in their learning and using a constant flow of information to assess student understanding and revise processes as needed.

www.nmsa.org/Publications/TodaysMiddleLevelEducator/tabid/1409/Default.aspx?name=formative

EXTREME MAKEOVER: SCHOOLS EDITION

"Teachers at work: Improving teacher quality through school design"

Education Sector Reports, October 2009

A pilot school in Brooklyn is using a new organizational design that grants teachers more time to plan instruction and collaborate, at no higher cost to the school and with demonstrated results for students. The Generation Schools model operates on the belief that improving teacher recruitment and raising performance expectations must be accompanied by a transformation in the job structure itself. By giving teachers more time to prepare lessons, review results, and consult with colleagues, the model provides a design and principles that could be adopted by other schools to improve teaching and learning success.

www.educationsector.org/research/research_show.htm?doc_id=1058462

theme / THE BASIC INGREDIENTS

Proof positive: *The keys to successful change are in our grasp. Q&A with Michael Fullan.*

The fundamentals of professional learning are well-established, and, in many places, clearly evident. Considering the entire system is critical, as are effective leadership and a focus on every child. Being savvy about change requires identifying and targeting systemic effort on the improvement strategies that yield results.

By Tracy Crow

Blending together, step by step: *Principal uses professional learning to combine two school cultures into one.*

A principal consolidating two elementary schools in rural Indiana had the opportunity to establish a new culture of collaboration and professional learning. By starting with the basics of establishing trust, setting common goals, and making time for job-embedded learning, this instructional leader drove the school to student success.

By Linda E. Martin, Tracy Shafer, and Sherry Kragler

Weighing the workshop: *Assess the merits with six key criteria for planning and evaluation.*

Facilitators of professional development must attend to the details of six concepts to ensure that they create effective learning experiences. Their planning should examine coherence, climate, instructional strategies, participant engagement, meeting logistics, and assessment and feedback.

By Catherine A. Little and Kristina Ayers Paul

Lasting impression: *Targeted learning plan has a maximum impact on teacher practice.*

Learning opportunities without follow-up and ongoing support are unlikely to have impact. Planning cycles of learning that include coaching, reflection, reading, and discussion will lead to implementation and results.

By Jeff Nelsen and Amalia Cudeiro

NSDC's standards to the rescue: *Focus on context, process, and content provides a strong foothold for mentor program.*

Mentors of the 200 new teachers who enter Washoe County School District (Reno, Nev.) each year must determine what new teachers need to know, what professional learning will help them, and how the district will know if the learning has impact. The district used NSDC's standards as a framework for planning, with impressive results.

By Sharyn Appolloni

From group to team: *Skilled facilitation moves a group from a collection of individuals to an effective team.*

Team development isn't automatic in schools — teachers don't necessarily know how to collaborate effectively. Group leaders can help teams develop by attending to stages of team development and carefully facilitating and planning collaborative learning opportunities.

By Ginny V. Lee

features

Deeply embedded, fully committed: *Leaders transform Washington district into a professional learning community.*

With a philosophy that learning by doing has impact and that the fundamental purpose of schools is student and adult learning, one district in Washington used professional learning communities to embed teacher growth into the workday. Principal leadership was essential in establishing this cultural transformation.

By Robert Eaker and Janel Keating

Tackling resistance: *Turn what could be a very bad day into a very good opportunity.*

School-based coaches sometimes face resistance from the teachers they support. Several coaching strategies can help overcome teacher discomfort or intransigence.

Coaches must establish a plan to reach out to reluctant partners in order to ensure coaches and teachers meet their shared goals of improved student learning.

By Annemarie B. Jay



7 OTHER HIGHLY EFFECTIVE HABITS, WITH A NOD TO STEPHEN COVEY

We've created the following guidelines — with a nod to Stephen Covey — with the belief that our job is to facilitate learning experiences that create intellectual and emotional growth for educators and the students they teach. Whether we're talking about educational technology, differentiation, adolescent development, or popular culture, we want teachers to understand new information in useful and reflective ways.

1. Walk a mile in their shoes.

We respect our teachers' needs in any way that we can. We survey our teachers about their needs and spend time meeting participants in our first session. We differentiate their assignments and scaffold final projects limited only by their imagination. We make sure all work can be directly applied to their classroom.

2. Teach, think, and play.

Many workshop settings don't allow ample time for applying, discussing and playing with ideas. Ryan created a graduate class about popular culture in the classroom that is titled "Teach, Think, Play." The premise is that teachers need all three components to deliver the best learning possible. First, we need to study the ways educators teach in the classroom. To step beyond teaching, we want people to think and explore theoretical discourses around the course or professional development topic. Lastly, we require our teachers to play with their ideas to create their final projects. True learning experiences encompass all those pieces.

3. Make connections with everything.

Often, our role is to create opportunities for transference of knowledge and experience among people, disciplines, and activities. Once teachers start connecting the dots inside the classroom with outside experiences, learning becomes personal and powerful.

PAM GOBLE (pgoble@ccsd93.com) is a Chicago-area middle school literacy teacher. RYAN GOBLE, (rrg75@me.com) is an instructional coach and curriculum coordinator in the South Bronx. Both also work as adjunct faculty at area universities while completing their doctorates. They are mother and son and often share ideas on Ryan's "Making Curriculum Pop" Ning, <http://mcpopmb.ning.com>.

When our teachers do readings or activities, we ask them to share personal connections they made with the text. One of Ryan's "final exams" is a tiered activity where teachers answer questions on sticky notes, cluster them around themes, and use markers to connect these ideas to their colleagues' responses, creating a massive mind map.

4. Make the work about learning, not grades.

When teachers in a graded workshop express anxiety about their grades, it becomes hard for them to focus on exploration of content. We stress that our goal for them is to learn; the grade will come, and we take responsibility for helping them achieve that goal. Our assignments are built around what teachers know and have learned, as opposed to quizzing them on facts.

5. Create structures to abandon structures.

Josh Waitzkin, the chess prodigy in the film *Searching for Bobby Fisher*, explains how one must "learn form in order to leave form." You plan out as much as you can imagine for your workshop, with clear goals, schedule, and varied instructional methods. A structure is most successful when it yields to the needs of the participants.

In one of Ryan's classes, the teachers decided an activity was going so well that they would continue through lunch. A learning community formed from a group that had known each other for five instructional days. If you need a quick confidential vote to change direction, use sticky notes.

6. Constantly get and give feedback and take time to process learning experiences in a variety of ways.

Successful companies are obsessed with using customer feedback to improve their product. To make sure we receive feedback, we create a variety of daily exit surveys. Teachers might write about a concept that has intrigued them, something about the instruction they'd like to change, an idea they want to develop with the class. Many activities will get at the pulse of your class while also communicating that you are there to learn, too. Use index cards and go over them the next day. Make the prompt worthwhile and thoughtful.

7. Embrace ex post facto curriculum design.

Sometimes what you were really teaching does not reveal itself until your original plan has been executed. After each event, we examine the feedback we've gathered. We're often surprised that the outcome of a session might not have been what we intended or planned, and that's OK. Unintended detours and outcomes are hallmarks of our richest learning experiences. ■



Pam Goble



Ryan Goble