

Building hope, giving affirmation:

Learning communities that address social justice issues bring equity to the classroom.

By Stephanie Hirsh and Shirley M. Hord

To ensure effective professional learning that supports a social justice agenda, educators identify appropriate content, select relevant processes, and establish a learning context. The professional learning community environment naturally complements an equity-oriented school vision, one that reaches beyond academic goals to develop students as fully informed and engaged citizens.

The challenge for educators:

Seattle's superintendent outlines social justice priorities and their importance in efforts to close the achievement gap.

At NSDC's 2010 Summer Conference, Seattle Superintendent Maria Goodloe-Johnson shared her goals and passion for reaching all students, regardless of race, class, and culture. She calls upon fellow educators to realize a mutual responsibility to serve children.

Coaches root out deep bias.

By Valerie von Frank

Schools in Oakland, Calif., work with coaches from the National Equity Project to improve instructional practices. Step one is a series of frank discussions that encourage educators to examine their own perspectives on the journey to developing themselves as equity-oriented practitioners.

A large cup of insight:

Educator hones student-teacher relationships one sugary coffee at a time.

By Daniel Horsey

As the restorative justice coordinator at a small charter school in Denver, Colo., one educator built his understanding of students' lives and cultures one conversation at a time. He and his school peers created a new environment for communication and relationships by drawing upon their senses of humanity and empathy.

The long and winding road to social justice:

Missouri district uses culturally responsive instruction to close the achievement gap.

By Charlotte Ijei and Julie Harrison

While many schools take the initial steps to add diversity to their curriculum, educators in the Parkway School District in St. Louis, Mo., progressed to advanced levels of equity work. Professional learning in the district integrated a new outlook throughout schools.

Tradition becomes the teacher:

Community events enrich educators' professional learning.

By Margery Ginsberg and Anthony Craig

The Tulalip Tribes Salmon Ceremony proved to be an enlightening learning opportunity for elementary educators in the Marysville (Wash.) School District. Careful groundwork helped educators know what to watch for; reflective discussions afterwards led to using insights to refine instructional practices and perspectives.

Through students' eyes:

Students offer fresh insights into social justice issues in schools.

By Alison Cook-Sather

While there are both benefits and dangers to asking students for their views on how to best serve a diverse student body, the outcomes can be instructive for educators. A deliberate set of principles guides discussions that lead to effective professional learning and ongoing two-way communication.

Digging deeper:

Professional learning can go beyond the basics to reach underserved students.

By Sonia Caus Gleason

The foundations of effective professional learning become stronger when social justice goals inform how educators develop. Attention to underserved student groups, multiple types of data, and the impact of learning will move educators forward. Most important, however, is a strong commitment to social justice as a cause.

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columns

Collaborative culture:

Conversation protocols help district discuss all sides of complicated issues.

By Susan Scott and Michael W. Torres

Educators in Corpus Christi (Texas) turned to specific conversation protocols to tackle tough issues in an environment where many competing interests vied for attention.

Cultural proficiency:

Carefully planned campus visits encourage middle schoolers to feel college-bound.

By Sarah W. Nelson and Patricia L. Guerra

Several specific culturally responsive practices can help educators, beginning at the elementary level, as they work to support students from diverse backgrounds to join their peers in the college preparation track in high school.

From the director:

Social justice in schools requires difficult conversations and clear vision.

By Stephanie Hirsh

An important role of professional learning is changing the knowledge, skill, and beliefs of educators to ensure more students are successful in school.

features

What teachers want:

Educators at all career stages express the desire to connect with and learn from one another.

By Cynthia M. Compton

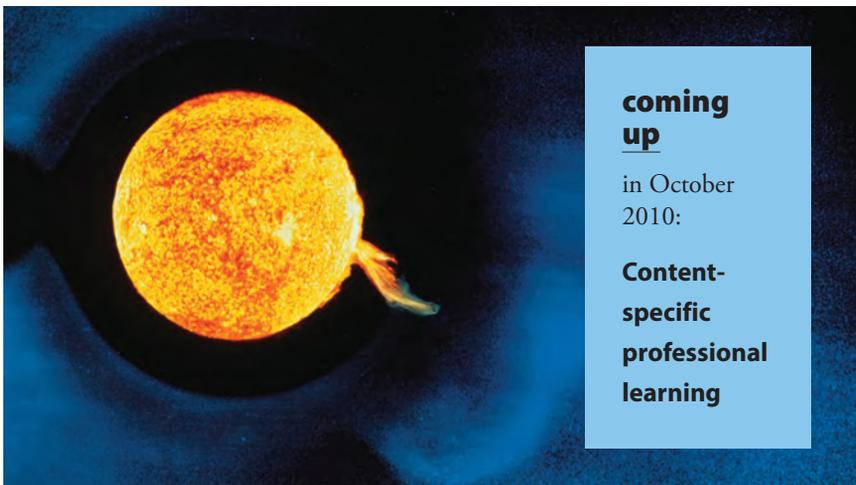
A small-scale research project investigated what types of professional learning teachers at different career phases prefer. Like many surveys of teachers, this project underscores the value of collaboration as a key aspect of a job-embedded professional learning agenda.

A better way to measure:

New survey tool gives educators a clear picture of professional learning's impact.

By Rolf K. Blank

As part of the Surveys of Enacted Curriculum project, leaders from the Council of Chief State School Officers and other organizations have developed an online survey to assess the effectiveness of professional learning in mathematics and science. The evaluation tool is designed to overcome several common dilemmas in measuring the impact of professional learning.



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