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conversation
serve up
heaping
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perspective p. 26

JSD

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OF THE
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DEVELOPMENT
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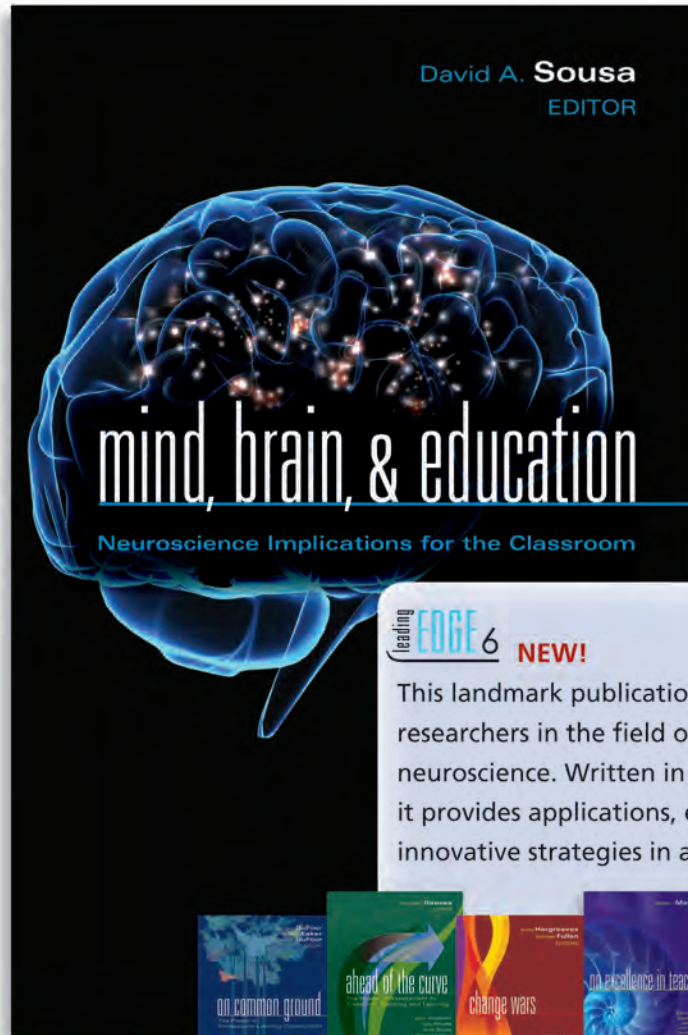
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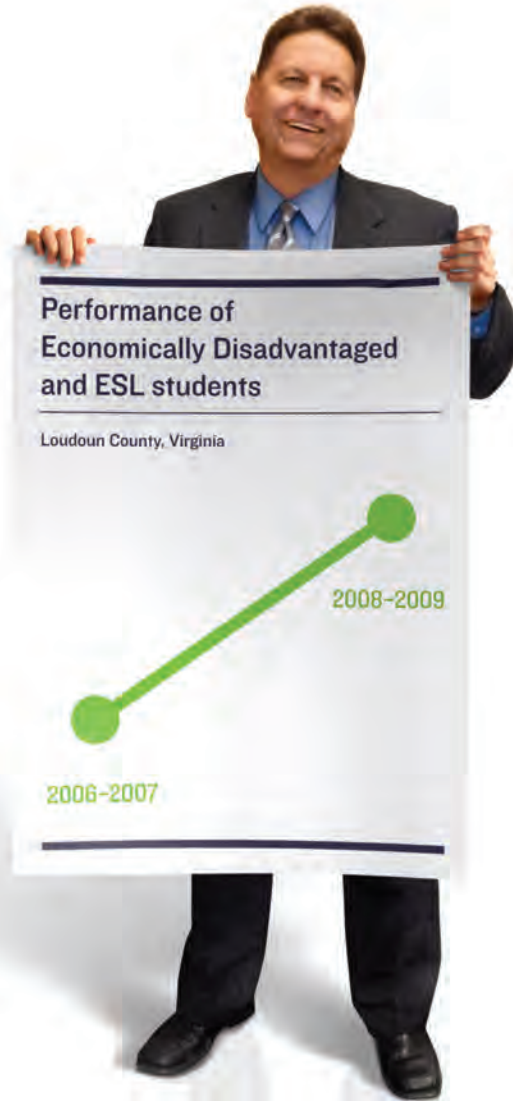
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BY STEPHANIE HIRSH



Welcome to *JSD* — please make yourself uncomfortable

For those of us who work on *JSD*, each issue is a learning journey. We talk about the meaning of the words we use, from whom we want to learn, which articles to feature. For some topics, we're confident that we have solid, in-house expertise. For others, we acknowledge our need to engage in study and discussion. Social justice is certainly one of those topics.

Our writers were among our primary teachers on this topic. The research done by Stephanie Hirsh and Shirley Hord to write the chapter from which "Building hope, giving affirmation" (p. 10) was adapted was enormously beneficial to our discussions about what we mean by the term "social justice." As with any topic, the perspectives and voices of the people who fill these pages expanded our ongoing development as learners.

It's exciting to work on a topic that pushes us, that makes us ask real questions about what we believe. To go another step and examine if our beliefs align with our words and even our actions is a great experience, if at times unsettling.

I have to remind myself that there is no reason I should be comfortable when I encounter something sensitive,

•

Tracy Crow (tracy.crow@nsdc.org) is associate director of publications of the National Staff Development Council.

new, or challenging. If I'm comfortable, how much am I changing? How deeply can I be examining my beliefs or stretching my knowledge if I don't experience some disequilibrium? Sarah Nelson confirmed this for me when she and Patricia Guerra spoke with me for our online-only Q-and-A (see more in the box at right). As Nelson said about assisting educators in developing their cultural proficiency knowledge: "This is a lengthy process — it's a lot of hard work. If you are working on this and at no point you are uncomfortable, then you're not doing the learning."

In the end, there isn't anything in this issue itself that makes me uncomfortable. As I read a definition of social justice that includes the goals of developing participatory citizens along with providing equitable academic opportunities (see p. 11), I am energized rather than anxious. When I read about strategies that take educators into communities to learn about cultural assets (p. 36) or that give teachers a way to hear student insights (p. 42), I know that readers take away practical, actionable knowledge. Reading how schools, districts, and individual educators have made progress in creating socially just learning environments is inspirational; learning about replicable models is always useful.

I don't know many educators who would disagree with the goals of everything we discuss in this issue, or

Beginning the journey

Patricia L. Guerra and Sarah W. Nelson, who write *JSD*'s cultural proficiency column, are the subject of this issue's Q-and-A feature, offered exclusively online. Nelson and Guerra outline a process of beginning a social justice journey and offer reasons for hope. Read their words online at www.nsd.org/news/jsd/.

who would argue with the idea that education is a civil right. But then there is the next step to move systems in a direction where all students have access to everything we want schools to accomplish. Once we dig deeper, challenging beliefs and long-held assumptions, starting with ourselves, we encounter something more difficult. This is when I get uncomfortable. Looking in the mirror, acknowledging who I am and where I come from, I can't pretend I don't have biases. The discomfort of that truth and the guilt that accompanies it creates anxiety. And those moments of anxiety are necessary. If we aren't willing to take that scary leap — every one of us — then change can't happen. We can't take the later steps in the process if we won't take the first step. We all hold assumptions, and we all have biases. As you read this issue of *JSD*, I invite you to make yourself uncomfortable. You have peers who will support you along the way. ■



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– NSDC 2009 Annual Conference attendee

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Beverly Hall, Douglas Reeves, Andy Hargreaves, Michele Norris, and Ron Clark



STRENGTHENING NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

“Key points regarding ESEA re-authorization”

A Broader, Bolder Approach to Education, May 2010

As federal lawmakers take up the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (NCLB), A Broader, Bolder Approach to Education has laid out six key principles for consideration. In a statement, the group argues for state-



developed accountability systems that go beyond student test scores to include qualitative observations and evaluations. It also urges a focus on a full, well-rounded curriculum rather than one that

emphasizes math and reading. Finally, the statement calls for recognizing and addressing the fundamental problems faced by disadvantaged students — the social, economic, and community conditions that prevent them from coming to school ready to learn.

www.boldapproach.org/20100512_bba_key_points_esea_reauthorization.pdf

PRINCIPAL IMPACT

“Principal effectiveness and leadership in an era of accountability: What research says”

CALDER Urban Institute, April 2010

Although the role of principals in promoting school effectiveness is anecdotally well-established, empirical studies have been hampered by limited data on the work that principals do and the impact of that work. Researchers at the CALDER Urban Institute used longitudinal state data to explore the effects principals have on school outcomes, providing evidence that principal quality has a broad impact on all aspects of his or her school, including student achievement. The research also reveals that skilled principals are less likely to be working in struggling schools, a discrepancy with implications for improving equity among schools.

www.caldercenter.org/upload/calder-research-and-policy-brief-8.pdf



HIGHLIGHTING WHAT WORKS

Public School Insights *Learning First Alliance*

This web site promotes a national conversation about what works in public schools and how to translate those successes for other schools. It features success stories and interviews with key players in education, as well as a tool kit with resources for communications, staffing, curriculum, and reform. Its blog covers a wide range of subjects, including legislation, professional learning, assessment, and curriculum. Post your thoughts on these topics, read others' viewpoints, and browse archives.

www.publicschoolinsights.org/

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

“Teaching NOW” *Teacher magazine*

Teacher leaders use this blog to share news and resources and discuss subjects of interest. Coverage, the site explains, “runs the gamut from the inspirational to the infuriating, from practical classroom tips to raging policy debates, and from ‘news you can use’ to ‘news of the weird.’” Recent posts discuss teacher retention, cyberbullying, professional development, and what teachers do in the summer. Read posts, and add your own thoughts.

http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching_now/



LEADERSHIP MAKES ITS MARK

Learning from leadership: Investigating the links to improved student learning

Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement/University of Minnesota and Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto, July 2010



Funded by The Wallace Foundation, this study offers new evidence affirming the connection between what school leaders do and student achievement and sheds new light on what effective leadership involves. Principals exert the most influence by improving teachers' motivation and working conditions. The study shows that leadership makes its mark largely by strengthening a school's professional community, an environment where teachers work together to improve classroom instruction.

<http://snipurl.com/zwgl0>



BOOMER POWER

"How boomers can contribute to student success: Emerging encore career opportunities in K-12 education"

National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2010

As schools struggle to fill teacher vacancies left by retirements and career changes, baby boomers who are retired or nearing retirement could prove to be a fresh source of skilled, experienced workers. Whether they have a background in teaching or in another field whose skills could translate well to administrative

work, boomers offer an opportunity to form new, nontraditional teams and provide alternatives to the standard one-teacher-per-classroom model. This paper explores the possibilities for boomers in classrooms and schools, using three case studies, interviews, data analysis, and new research.

www.nctaf.org/resources/research_and_reports/nctaf_research_reports/documents/ElizabethFoster-HowBoomersCanContribute.pdf

FINLAND'S SUCCESS STORY

"Steady work: Finland builds a strong teaching and learning system"

Rethinking Schools, Summer 2010

In the 1970s, Finland's educational system was performing poorly. Today, the country ranks first on the PISA among OECD nations; its students demonstrate highly equitable achievement rates and educational completion rates above 90% at both the basic and secondary levels.

This article explores how Finland used purposeful investment in educational goals, building teacher capacity, and overhauling its curriculum and assessment systems. Interestingly, its process has been nearly the opposite of that followed in the U.S.: It has shifted from a centralized system with an emphasis on external testing to a more localized system in which teachers design the curriculum.

www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/24_04/24_04_finland.shtml



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Quotable

"Working to raise achievement levels for all segments of the population is a key to keeping America strong and vital. Striving to remove group identities as predictors of achievement — in other words, to close achievement gaps between groups — will help make the fruits of America's vitality more equally available."

Source: *Toward Excellence With Equity* by Ronald F. Ferguson, Harvard Education Publishing Group, 2007.

www.agi.harvard.edu

A related source of useful information is The Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard.

www.edtrust.org

DEFINING THE PROBLEM, HIGHLIGHTING SOLUTIONS

NATIONAL INEQUITIES IN STATE AND LOCAL REVENUE PER STUDENT

	PER-STUDENT GAP
High-poverty vs. low-poverty schools	\$773
High-minority vs. low-minority districts	\$1,122

Source: Education Trust analysis based on U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Census Bureau data for the 2005-06 school year.

See *America and Her Urban School Districts: A Quick Look at the Numbers*, available at www.edtrust.org/dc/resources/presentations.

Numerous studies detail the resource inequities between high- and low-performing schools and discuss possible implications. The Education Trust promotes high academic achievement for all students. Their data analyses and reports give districts, communities, and policy makers powerful information for pinpointing concrete areas of need among specific groups of students. At the same time, their stories of success — see the Dispelling the Myth section of the website — highlight pathways to promising results for underserved students.

What's the problem?

One starting point for understanding how different groups of students perform relative to their majority peers is a series of reports from the Center on Education Policy. Three recent reports discuss the educational needs of African-American, Latino, and Asian-American students. The reports reflect the growing national concern about the need for education and policy leaders at all levels to more aggressively improve the quality and effectiveness of these students' educational opportunities.



www.cep-dc.org

- *Policy Implications of Trends for Asian American Students*
- *A Call to Action to Raise Achievement for African American Students*
- *Improving Achievement for the Growing Latino Population Is Critical to the Nation's Future*

A CULTURAL PROFICIENCY PRIMER

www.nsd.org/news/authors/guerranelson.cfm

Since 2007, *JSD* columnists **Patricia L. Guerra**, top, and **Sarah W. Nelson**, bottom, have shared practical strategies, foundational knowledge, and real-life experiences to build readers' understanding of cultural proficiency in schools. (See their column on p. 61.) Reach back in the *JSD* archive to inform your learning and to engage your peers in a cultural proficiency exploration.



www.nsd.org/news/jsd/

Guerra and Nelson shared their experience and insights for this issue in an online-only Q-and-A. Be sure to visit the web for this additional social justice piece.



In the most recent *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher*, MetLife Foundation identified schools as high-collaboration or low-collaboration schools based on the reported frequency of participation in several types of collaborative learning activities (team meetings, discussions of student work, peer observation).

Both teachers and principals in schools with higher levels of collaboration are more likely than others to strongly agree that teachers in a school share responsibility for the achievement of all students and that greater collaboration among teachers and school leaders would have a major impact on improving student achievement.

Notably, the schools with higher levels of collaboration also report a higher level of trust. In those schools with higher levels of collaboration, educators strongly agree that a high level of trust exists (teachers: 69% in high-collaboration schools vs. 42% in low-collaboration schools; principals: 78% vs. 60%).

“... the context of a community of professional learners fosters the ideals of social justice.” (See “Building hope, giving affirmation,” p. 10.)

EDUCATORS ALSO SAY

	TEACHERS	PRINCIPALS
Setting high expectations for all students would have a major impact on improving student achievement.	86%	89%
Having adequate public funding and support for education are very important for improving student achievement.	92%	96%
Strengthening ties among schools and parents is very important for improving student achievement.	88%	89%

Source: *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Collaborating for Student Success.*

BUILDING HOPE,



GIVING AFFIRMATION

**LEARNING COMMUNITIES THAT ADDRESS
SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES
BRING EQUITY TO THE CLASSROOM**



By Stephanie Hirsh and Shirley M. Hord

A school that ensures that all students — regardless of race, creed, color, socioeconomic status, gender, or disabilities — have access to and receive the highest-quality education has achieved a key measure of social justice (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Curren, 2009). Since the most significant factor in whether students learn well is quality teaching (Haycock & Crawford, 2008; Peske & Haycock, 2006), and teaching is enhanced through continuous professional development (Hord, 2009; Hord, 2010), the link between social justice and professional learning is undeniable.

Teachers cannot promote social justice if they do not have the knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes necessary to ensure success for all students. Principals cannot lead a school committed to social justice if they do not believe in social justice and promote a vision for advancing it in a high-performing school, with the knowledge of how to prioritize resources and support the needs of faculty.

Social justice advocates posit that successful academic achievement alone does not address inequities that occur as a result of the “isms” of racism, oppression, and others (Sensoy & Diangelo, 2009). At the same time, the goals of a successful education are not defined solely as academic achievement, but include proficiencies related to participatory membership in a democratic society. As Trueba (1998) so elegantly stated, “Perhaps the main dream of our democracy is that education is for all and that education can empower all peoples to participate in our democratic structures and make an important contribution to our society” (p. 166). Additional goals are the development of capacities and confidence to conduct oneself responsibly in support of one’s own well-being; the ability to contribute to the well-being of others whose circumstances bar them

from completing successful attainment of well-being for themselves; and facilitating the translation of the society’s beliefs and values to upcoming generations, ensuring community service and social justice are maintained and remain an integral part of society’s fabric (Arneson, 2007).

To contribute to this robust vision for schooling, there must be a consideration of the value systems that educators bring. When educators grow to the point that they can see “the light in the eyes of their students as evidence that they are capable and worthy human beings, then schools can become places of hope and affirmation for students of all backgrounds and all situations” (Nieto, 1999, p. 176). Professional development must include appropriate content, use effective designs, and strengthen the context necessary to sustain these efforts.

IDENTIFYING CONTENT

Schools that are successful at achieving such a vision are places where all staff are members of a community committed to professional learning. In the learning community’s work, the faculty is focused on what data about student academic performance and other measures tell them (Hord & Hirsh, 2008; Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). They examine all data from multiple perspectives to determine where gaps exist (Guerra & Nelson, 2007). Then they establish a purposeful learning agenda that will support their own acquisition of new knowledge and skills to assist all students.

Well-intentioned teachers can be committed to great teaching, and still the beliefs, habits, and strategies they have adopted over the years may work against them. As an example, there are skillful teachers who view slowing the pace of instruction as an appropriate strategy for serving struggling students. And yet research reports that acceleration, not remediation, has a greater impact (Coalition for Student Success, 2009). There are teachers who lower expectations because of students’ home living circumstances. Exposing and discussing these issues as a faculty can expose

misinterpretations of research and ultimately strengthen the community’s commitment to the school vision for social justice (DeMulder, Ndura-Ouédraogo, & Stribling, 2009).

When a school staff limits its learning goals to academic performance only, the data analyses and subsequent decisions for learning may be a bit easier. But when social justice as an outcome is added to the mix, the content needs to expand, as do the data examined. In addition to understanding literacy, math, or differentiation strategies, for example, principals and teachers must understand the foundation and requirements for social justice. Such learning is not just about appreciating racial or class differences; it is about helping all staff to identify and understand the impact of organizational and individual practices on each person — staff and students, those in the majority and those in the minority (Berman, Chambliss, & Geiser, 1999).

Three critical questions guide the selection of content for professional development, and the social justice lens raises several other integral questions (see box below).

- To what degree are educators able to use the content to capitalize on the unique qualities of each student; create safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments; and demonstrate high expectations for all students?
- To what degree do educators possess deep content knowledge, expertise in rich instructional strategies, and ability to develop and use appropriate classroom-based assessments?
- To what degree are educators prepared to engage families in support of students’ outcomes? (NSDC, 2001).

In exploring these questions, staff select new practices that accommodate academic performance and social justice goals. Then the faculty determines learning outcomes, the policies they want to examine, the teaching strategies they want to be able to implement in classrooms, as well as how they will monitor and assess the impact of their efforts.

LEARNING IN COMMUNITY

Under the best circumstances, schoolwide staff learning promotes collaboration, joint responsibility, and implementation of a compelling vision for teacher and student performance. Team learning at the grade level or subject area increases consistency across classrooms and helps teachers address challenges associated with grade-level or content-specific learning objectives (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Hirsh & Hord, 2008).

Learning team members work together to apply schoolwide learning to their classrooms and their students. Some begin by determining where students are struggling, and planning how to apply new schoolwide learning to those challenges. Some wait to see how schoolwide learning supports their own cycle of improvement. When the learning teams identify student learning needs, they can isolate their own learning questions and create their own learning agenda.

As they increase their knowledge and skills, team members design new lessons for students based on a stronger understanding of the content and the skills their students need to achieve academic and social justice outcomes. Together they test the lessons and critique them afterward, looking for ways to improve them. They create classroom assessments to determine if new strategies produced desired results. And when they do not, they identify additional strategies for reteaching and reinforcing. When they feel confident their students have mastered the desired objectives or content, they repeat the cycle with another set of objectives or unit of study, each time identifying new learning priorities that lead to improved instruction and student growth (Lewis, Perry, & Hurd, 2004; Perry & Lewis, 2009).

SELECTING LEARNING PROCESSES

How educators approach their own learning is key to successful implementation of any new program and/or strategy (Hall & Hord, 2010). Schoolwide and grade-level teams increase the likelihood of successful social justice implementation by addressing questions related to social justice and adult learning. Questions may include:

- How will educators acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to implement the strategies successfully?
- How will the learning be monitored and evaluated?
- How will educators be supported throughout the change process?
- How will the relationships within the school be leveraged to advance implementation?
- And, importantly, who is going to ask these hard questions and monitor the tough conversations?

If the learning community is committed to substantive change in knowledge, skills, and dispositions, then research suggests that teams will need to set aside time for traditional workshop learning supported by follow-up coaching sessions (Joyce

What do we need to learn to become socially just?	Are multiple goals influenced by the selection of a particular content learning agenda?	Does the content take into consideration the many student differences and challenges teachers face in classrooms and provide accommodations for them?	Are teacher needs for working with children of different backgrounds met?	Does the content facilitate teacher reflection?	Does the content prepare students to become empowered citizens?	Do the system’s policies support equitable access of appropriate content that advances learning for all?
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& Showers, 2003). Workshop learning is used as a broad term to include sessions with experts, colleagues, or external assistance providers. While some teachers may be able to acquire and demonstrate new knowledge and skills without some form of organized learning, most teachers will require such learning and support in order to develop a foundation for making instructional and philosophical changes. If schoolwide changes about attitudes and expectations are a desired outcome, then settings that convene the entire staff for hard conversations and facilitated dialogue may be necessary

first steps. This fulfills the need to support and guide staff to look deeply into their beliefs and values, their predispositions and worldviews (Guerra & Nelson, 2009).

While we can start with changing behaviors, if we don't modify beliefs about our children's needs and what is truly required to provide them social justice, we will make changes at the superficial level and will not initiate nor sustain true and lasting change (Guerra & Nelson, 2009). Once new knowledge and skills are deeply implemented, there are many options for rein-

forcing their application through different modes of continuous professional development: learning team meetings, classroom observations, support groups, peer coaching, classroom walk-throughs, and more.

ASSESSING PROGRESS

Establishing goals for professional learning is key to ensuring results. Team members can move from goals to setting benchmarks that will demonstrate they are making appropriate progress. They can determine what documentation will serve as evidence of progress. If changes in teacher beliefs and practices are expected, they may develop Innovation Configurations (Hall & Hord, 2010), a road map that will allow each staff member to understand what the innovation looks like in practice, and what it will potentially mean for the entire school. If changes in student achievement are expected, they will create formative and summative assessments to provide feedback necessary to know if they are on track. Grade-level and subject-matter teams can use student work as another indicator of staff and students' sense of efficacy.

SUPPORTING CHANGE

How will educators be supported through the emotional and psychological aspects of making change? The school learn-

ing community has many strategies to draw from to support teachers from all backgrounds and at all stages. These strategies include organizing support groups to discuss challenges or calling on a coach to assist with implementation or provide feedback. While there may be predictable patterns of beliefs and behaviors that educators transcend through the change process, the community will be able to access multiple strategies to assist themselves in dealing with the technical and personal challenges associated with change (Hall & Hord, 2010).

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Finally, how will the relationships within the school be leveraged to advance implementation? The potential impact of any change initiative is only as powerful as the number of staff members committed, as well as the depth of expertise (Hord, Roussin, & Sommers, 2010). Implementation must be supported at the school's leadership level as well as the grade and/or subject level (Hall & Hord, 2010; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Without the support of colleagues at all levels who commit to mutual accountability to all students, there is little incentive or pressure to work through what is necessary to achieve success with the innovation (Hord et al., 2010). Trust and transparency should permeate the community and allow for each voice (Bryk & Schneider, 2004). Each person must feel empowered to speak; the outliers must have a voice and be listened to, with the opportunity for others to exert persuasion.

CREATING A CONTEXT FOR LEARNING

To support learning, the real work of those collaborating in professional learning communities, all teams require a supportive culture to assist them in their efforts to achieve goals that reach beyond academics. When examining the culture, key questions emerge:

- How does the school organize itself for the purpose of professional learning?
- How do leaders responsible for guiding professional learning go about this work?
- Do leaders themselves have a social justice lens through which they anchor their work (Berman & Chambliss, 2000)?
- How are resources allocated to support the learning agenda that advances the social justice agenda?

The responses to these questions are embedded in the research-based components of professional learning communities identified by Hord (2004).

A pursuit of social justice begins with educators' self-examination and results in not only acknowledging content needs and learning gaps, but recognizing where they lack a deep understanding regarding society, their students, their students' circumstances, and what students need from schools and teachers to be successful. A social justice lens inspires more questions:

- What system policies and power structures are prohibiting our students from being truly successful in these areas?

Forthcoming book

This article is adapted with permission from the forthcoming book, *Educational Leaders Encouraging the Intellectual and Professional Capacity of Others: A Social Justice Agenda* by Elizabeth Murakami-Ramalho and Anita Pankake.

Edited volume for the American Educational Research Association Leadership for Social Justice Series. Charlotte, NC: IAP — Information Age Publishing.

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- At what level do we believe our students can achieve the vision and goals we have set forth for them?
- What do we need from everyone — administrators, parents, community — to achieve this vision (NSDC, 2001)?

COMMUNITY PROVIDES THE RIGHT CONTEXT

The community of professional learners is a self-organizing entity, characterized by democratic participation of all members, teachers, and administrators (Hord & Hirsh, 2009). This participation promotes sharing power, authority, and decision making, one of the research-based components of the professional learning community. This is not the typical positional leader's behavior, but it is foundational to the professional learning community and to a community committed to social justice (McKenzie et al., 2008). In terms of achieving social justice, sharing power, authority, and decision making allows for all voices to be expressed — and counted — creating a place to initiate equity (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005).

In these and other ways, the context of a community of professional learners fosters the ideals of social justice. Leaders will elaborate especially on the imperative of uncovering and changing inequities (Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004) through the articulation of a challenging yet attainable vision. They do this while engaging the entire community with all its perspectives. The result is a more complete vision for students that demands a more complex learning agenda for staff.

We close with the belief that the culture created by a community of professional learners can nurture social justice and directly contribute to social justice for students and staff of the school. A school organized to support schoolwide as well as team-based professional learning offers a powerful setting for social justice to grow, develop, and impact the school's citizens.

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THE CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATORS

SEATTLE'S SUPERINTENDENT OUTLINES SOCIAL JUSTICE PRIORITIES AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN EFFORTS TO CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Seattle Superintendent Maria Goodloe-Johnson spoke at NSDC's 2010 Summer Conference in Seattle in July. Goodloe-Johnson shared her insights on the role of professional learning in reaching all students in a diverse urban district. Below are selected excerpts. Listen to her entire speech online at www.nsd.org/opportunities/summerconference.cfm.

WHAT WILL IT TAKE?

We all are so familiar with the impact that culture, race, and language have on all of us. The literature is so clear on the development of language in preschool-age children, the impact of race and white privilege on how children are treated by middle-class adults, who make up the majority of our teaching force. Culture, race, and language are now the global keys to our children's future and success. Our children need to be biliterate and bicultural when they graduate from our public schools, yet we still don't seamlessly integrate culture, race, and language into our professional development expectations for all children. In Seattle, we are trying and will continue. What will it take?

In Seattle, we have already done at least three disproportionality studies in six years. We don't need any more data. What don't we understand or what are we continuing to ignore? As educators, we must be attuned to diversity in all its forms as part of closing the achievement gap and preparing all our students to be successful.

BRINGING OURSELVES TO OUR TEACHING

I remember as a young high school teacher in Colorado in the '80s, I had some of the very best professional development any new teacher could hope for. Support for differentiation, acceleration, pedagogy, and cultural competence was professional development support for all teachers. To this day, I remember TESA and GESA training, which taught teachers to pay attention to gender and cultural issues.

I often wonder if the reason I remember the trainings on race and gender so well was because of who I am, an African-American woman, and where and how I grew up: In a single-parent family, yet an extended family where both my grandmother and my uncle lived with us for a short time. I wonder if I pay attention to students who struggle and are unsuccessful because school came so easy to me and I chose to teach those who were limited or challenged in some way, because I was committed to those who needed the additional help and attention. And my mother taught us to always help others and give back.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR SUCCESS

Collaboration is key to success. This is the only way we guarantee consistently better results for all children. Attention to diversity in all its manifestations (language, culture, special needs, sexual orientation, poverty, race, and class) is a social justice priority, one that we have struggled with for way too long. We are engaged in school reform today because we are not and have not been successful with all children. It is not an accusation targeted at anyone, but a challenge to all of us today, including myself, to hold up the mirror and answer the question: "What do we need to do differently to improve the academic achievement of all students? What do we need to do differently to challenge all students? And what do we need to do differently to close the achievement gap, the opportunity gap, any gap that exists that inhibits learning?"



Photo by JOEL REYNOLDS

WE KNOW WHAT TO DO

This Ron Edmonds quote is as powerful to me today as a superintendent as it was in 1990, when I was a high school principal: "We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need in order to do this. Whether we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far."

ADJUSTING FRAMES OF REFERENCE

Jack Mezirow from Columbia Teachers College is a theorist who writes about transformative adult learning. Transformative learning is the process of effecting change in a frame of reference. I like to describe frame of reference as your current place in life and what helped develop and form your beliefs. I often refer to it as "peeling back the onion." There are many layers that have influenced and formed who we are today. The lenses of family, community, race, ethnicity, religion, demographics, and tradition all create our frame of reference.

Adults have acquired a coherent body of experience, associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses, and frames of reference that define their world. Frames of reference are the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences. They selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition, and feelings. They set our line of action. A simple example: I recently completed the Aspen Entrepreneurial Leadership program, a two-year opportunity to meet with other leaders from across the nation and world to tackle the issue of education reform. One night, walking back from dinner, two African-American males and a white female were passing a car that was stopped but had its lights on. My female white colleague went to the car, opened the door, and got in to try and turn off the lights. The two African-American males kept walking. Why? What would have happened if either one of them walked over and got in the car and tried to find a way to turn off the lights? The frame of reference and line of action was very different for my colleagues. The same applies in the classroom.

Once our frame of reference is set, we automatically move from one specific activity to another. We have a strong tendency to reject ideas that fail to fit our preconceptions, labeling those ideas as unworthy of consideration – aberrations, nonsense, irrelevant, weird, or mistaken. When circumstances permit, transformative learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience.

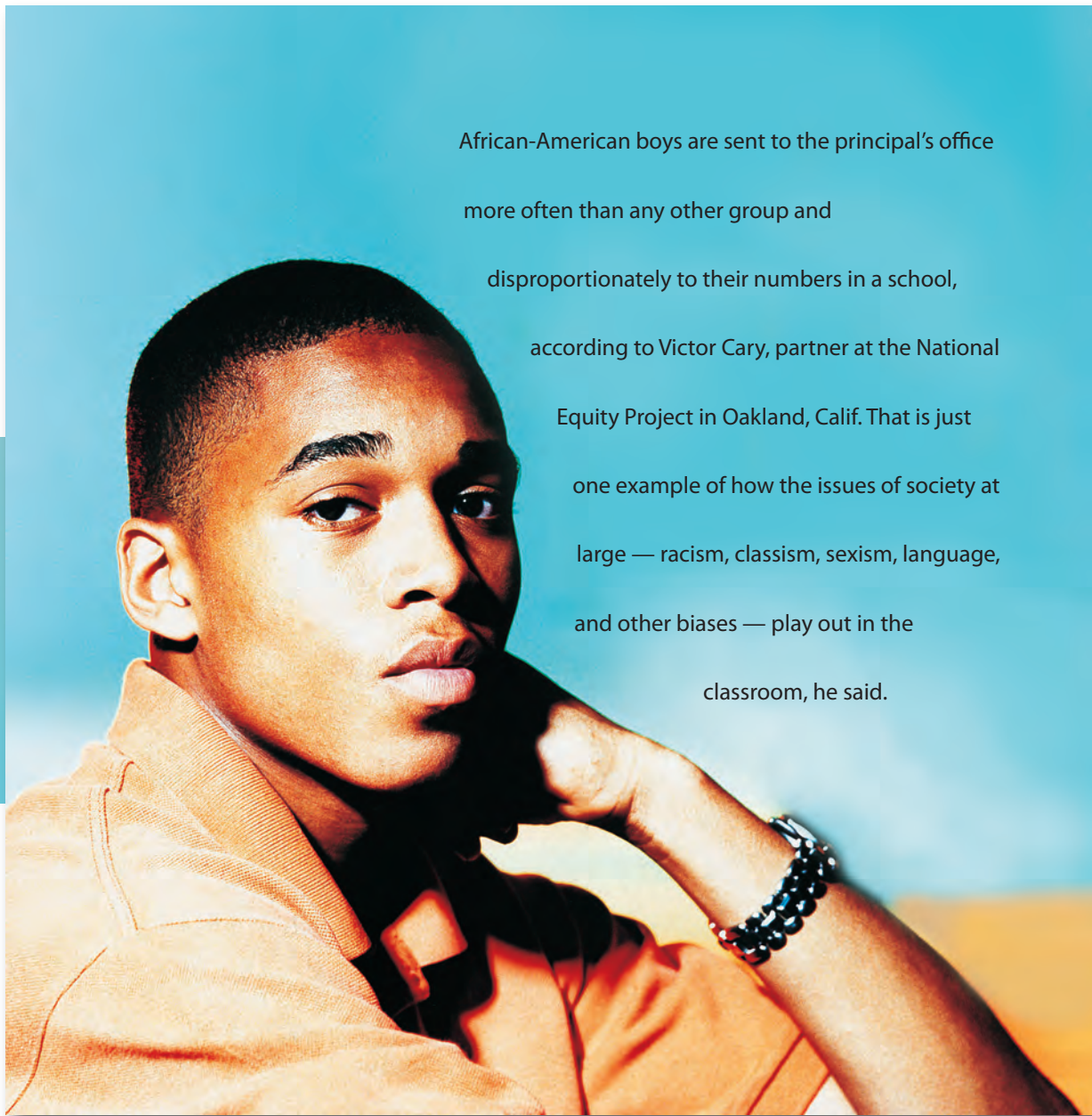
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Even if you didn't attend NSDC's Summer Conference in Seattle, you and your

colleagues can listen to all five keynote addresses. Milton Chen, Jennifer James, Vicki Phillips, Taylor Mali, and Maria Goodloe-Johnson shared their insights and

innovations. Audio files from each speech are available at

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African-American boys are sent to the principal's office more often than any other group and disproportionately to their numbers in a school, according to Victor Cary, partner at the National Equity Project in Oakland, Calif. That is just one example of how the issues of society at large — racism, classism, sexism, language, and other biases — play out in the classroom, he said.

By Valerie von Frank

If you were an African-American student at Acorn Woodland Elementary School in Oakland, Calif., a few years ago, chances are good you found yourself in trouble in the principal's office. Then-principal Kimi Kean said 80% of students suspended at the school were African-American — but African-Americans made up just 40% of the student population.

From California to Maine, according to Victor Cary, partner at the National Equity Project in Oakland, the pattern is the same. African-American boys, in particular, are sent to the principal's office more often than any other group and disproportionately to their numbers in a school. That is just one example of how the issues of society at large — racism, classism, sexism, language, and other biases — play out in the classroom, according to Cary.

“There's something institutional at play,” Cary said. “Our job is to help schools understand why that is so and

what they might do about it.”

Cary said change might begin by simply rephrasing one’s language. Rather than talking about the dropout rate for African-American boys, for example, he said his group invites a discussion of why and how schools are pushing out African-American males. A shift in language can help shift thinking.

Coaches with the National Equity Project, formerly the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools, lead participants through the emotional minefield of deep-rooted, sometimes unconscious biases. One aspect of the National Equity Project’s work is to help move educators past barriers that keep students from achieving by bringing forward issues of oppression and addressing them specifically, but in

helping educators target student groups such as English language learners or African-Americans for solutions and become aware of these students’ specific needs as opposed to instituting general solutions to problems such as low reading scores.

Depending on the data and mutually agreed-upon goals, the work might begin by allowing educators opportunities to “speak their truths.” “The coach’s job,” Cary said, “is to create a space for an honest, authentic conversation.”

Tom Malarkey, a coach with the National Equity Project, gave an example of a school in which he worked where the students and all noncertified staff members were people of color and most of the teachers were white. Bringing all staff members together, he led a process in which they

COACHES ROOT OUT DEEP BIAS

a nonjudgmental way, Cary said.

“It’s not about blame and shame,” Cary said. “It’s bringing to consciousness what in the institution is precipitating this. It’s being cognizant of how the institution is operating and who is benefiting.

“We help surface issues in a way that can serve kids. We don’t say anyone is doing something wrong.”

COACHING FOR EQUITY

The National Equity Project has a cadre of coaches who work with schools and districts to improve student achievement, with a particular focus in urban areas with large numbers of traditionally underperforming students.

Coaching is a way to significantly change the culture, context, and competency of schools, Cary said. According to the organization’s definition, coaching for equity is “the practice of guiding, instructing, provoking, and supporting people to achieve a mutually agreed-upon objective that interrupts historical patterns of inequity.”

Coaches work with leaders, leadership teams in schools or districts, and whole faculties. Cary said the work requires

shared their perspectives. The certified staff learned a lot from support staff members’ views on how the school operations were perceived by people of color, Malarkey said.

“People are affected by oppression,” Cary said. “We have to understand and deal with the effect it has. It matters who you are in relation to the children you’re teaching. Many teachers come from a different cultural background, different language experience than their students. It’s just different ways of being.”

He said one exercise the organization’s coaches often used involves constructivist listening, in which educators are paired and spend time listening to the other person’s perspective purely for the speaker’s benefit, not to share knowledge. Each has an opportunity to talk, but without response from the partner.

“We ask, ‘When was the last time you were listened to fully at work?’ ” Cary said, “then, ‘What was your experience as a learner yourself, and how might your identity have



Victor Cary

impacted your experience?’ People begin to think about things they haven’t thought about for years. It’s a way to break out of unconscious routines.”

Malarkey, who coached at Acorn Woodland, said coaching for equity must be undertaken carefully.

“It’s one thing to be an advocate focusing on the needs of underserved students,” he said. “It’s another thing to build people’s will to address those issues. A lot of work (for participants) is inside-out, who I am and how I am, my journey, for me to be effective and develop why it is important for me to address issues of race, class, and culture in school.”

Both Malarkey and Cary noted that there is no single answer to solving equity issues in schools, but building leadership capacity is essential. Coaches help build staff members’ capacity and support them in finding solutions that transform how teachers support and nurture each student

“People tend to want a silver bullet,” Malarkey said. “They

say, ‘You guys are the equity people. Tell us what to do.’ We have to shift the paradigm to what’s going to be most effective for their situation, help them develop a theory of action for themselves. It’s changing hearts and minds. It’s stepping back and asking the deeper questions so when they’re planning, they do it with a greater consciousness.”

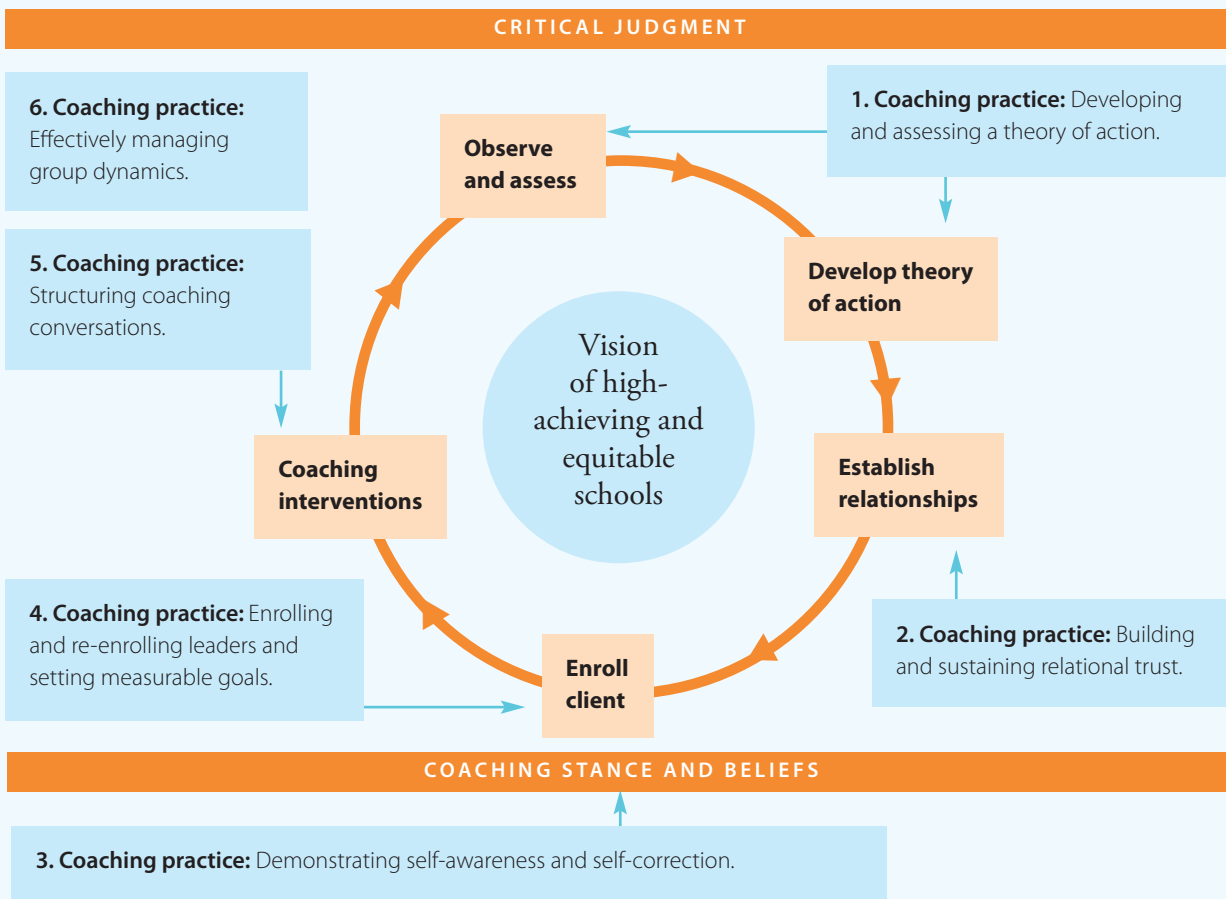
THE COACHING MODEL

The National Equity Project works in the areas of conditions or context, culture, and competency using a highly specific model for all its coaching efforts. The coaching cycle, which is nonlinear, involves these phases:

Observe and assess. The coach watches teachers’ instructional practices, observes leaders, talks one-to-one with staff, and asks about priorities, past experiences, goals, perceived obstacles, and related matters. Malarkey said, “The lens with us all the time is, What is the person’s or the collective awareness about equity

COACHING CYCLE WITH EMBEDDED COACH PRACTICE RUBRIC

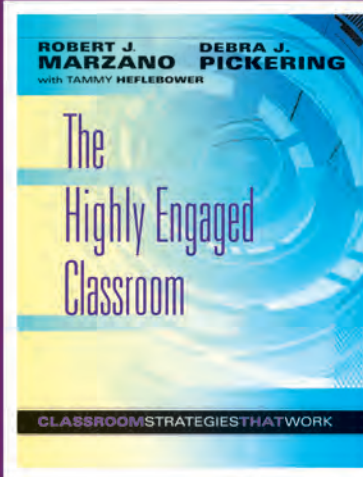
Lenses: systemic oppression, developmental learning, inquiry, systems thinking, change management.



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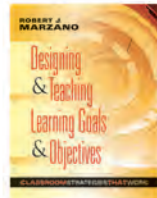
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Formative	Emergent	Developing	Integrating	Innovating
Demonstrates understanding of skills and of need for skills in all practice areas; has demonstrated competence in one or more content areas.	Shows proficiency in some practices and content areas.	Demonstrates proficiency in all content areas and engages most coaching practices skillfully to achieve goals.	Equips education leaders with practices and content competencies to effectively lead without coach assistance (fully builds leader capacity).	Shares and creates new knowledge and practices to improve performance in schools and in the coaching organization.
School development capacity		Leadership development capacity		

© National Equity Project.

challenges? How do they talk about low-achieving students? Are they explicit about race, class, culture, and language?” Malarkey said some staff will talk about “those students,” while more aware teachers may know that, for example, 30% of Latino students are underperforming compared with 5% of white students.

Malarkey said the coach seeks information about patterns in the school or district data, available resources, teachers’ content background, the school’s collaborative learning structures, and whether and how teachers work together.

Develop a theory of action. Using the information the coach has gathered, the next step is to develop a theory of action, plan interventions, and identify the intended outcomes of those actions for creating a high-achieving, equitable school. Part of this step is working with school staff to develop mutually agreed-upon, measurable goals. The collaboration increases the school’s commitment and accountability.

Establish relationships. Leaders within the school community will take responsibility for creating conditions that maximize adult and student learning, the National Equity Project believes. Coaches identify and build rapport with formal and informal leaders and work with them on relational competence and emotional intelligence, helping them look critically at themselves.

Enroll the client. When key staff are engaged and committed to clear outcomes, the coach and leaders can work together to develop a written work plan articulating coaching goals, including equity and achievement goals, coaching strategies, and the school’s commitments needed to achieve the goal. The plan also identifies what data will be collected to monitor progress.

Coaching interventions. Interventions depend on school

needs, but the National Equity Project supports work in general areas: Build instructional leaders’ capacity to support teacher development and improved pedagogy; establish and facilitate equity-centered professional learning communities; help schools and districts build strong family and community partnerships to support and motivate students; focus on school redesign so that resources and structures support teaching and learning, including teacher collaboration, expectations, and shared responsibility; and build leader and teacher cultural competence.

LEARNING FOR COACHES

All this work is facilitated by skilled coaches, carefully prepared through their own ongoing professional learning. National Equity Project coaches engage in monthly, day-long meetings to share experiences and have deep conversations that enhance their ability to sharpen the common lens they bring to their work in schools and districts. They develop shared language to describe their work.

Coaches spend this day reflecting on their own theories and attitudes, according to an organization document, “to uncover blind spots, reveal hidden assumptions, and take more considered actions.” Cary said professional learning for coaches focuses on developing emotional intelligence, practicing facilitating productive conversations, and developing “distress-free authority,” the ability of the coach to be comfortable in leading the process without feeling the need to have all the answers, among other pieces.

The coaches may focus on one aspect or course of study for up to a year, learning the core competencies of coaching. For example, Cary said coaches’ learning in the past has specifically addressed how to develop a theory of action, how to build relational trust, setting goals with the educators the coach is working with, managing group dynamics and difficult conversations, the meaning of cultural proficiency, and how to create structured conversations for one-to-one dialogue. They may study the research on a topic, then bring information to the group for

The coach seeks information about patterns in the school or district data, available resources, teachers’ content background, the school’s collaborative learning structures, and whether and how teachers work together, said Tom Malarkey.

discussion and reflection. See the table on p. 24 on the stages of coach development.

Coaches also work together in project teams that focus on their clients, sharing their progress toward goals and their challenges. They use protocols to structure conversations and help one another strategize.

“We take a rigorous, intentional approach to coaching with a methodology and a theory of action so we can impact children’s learning,” Cary said. “We want to make good on the promise of a quality education for every child. ‘People can solve their own problems if they have the will, skill, knowledge, and emotional capacity. This is not about fixing anybody. It’s about creating a partnership with adults and supporting them in growing their own practices. The evidence of success is they see a difference in performance of children.’”

CORE COMPETENCIES

Each National Equity Project coach takes part in ongoing professional learning around core competencies that are part of the coach’s evaluation:

1. **Data-based inquiry:** The coach leads development of a rigorous school practice of using data effectively to inform teaching and administration.
2. **Facilitative leadership:** The coach fosters the school leader’s skills for productive dialogue, collaboration, and goal setting through effective school meetings.
3. **Instructional leadership:** The coach provides expert advice to school leaders to develop and implement policies and procedures regarding school, vision, culture, management, instruction, and community relations.
4. **Equity-centered professional learning communities:** The coach leads school teams of educators to establish a process of continuous learning toward equitable achievement goals.
5. **School design:** The coach is able to manage large-scale projects of school creation and conversion.
6. **Cultural competence:** The coach enables educators to interact effectively in diverse cultural environments.
7. **Instructional coaching:** The coach builds teacher capacity to use accelerated learning strategies to do standards-based instruction and to evaluate student needs and progress.

SUCCESS

Kean, Acorn Woodland’s principal through 2009-10, frequently uses the word transformation when she talks about the school. She has reason. In 2002-03, the year after staff examined data on student suspensions, suspensions were reduced by 75%, she said, and the racial disparity was closing. Five years ago, 13% of students were performing at grade level; the school’s latest results in 2009-10 showed 49% of students at grade level in language arts and 65% in math on the state standardized test, making Acorn the most improved school in the school district out of 66 elementaries.

Coaches from the National Equity Project worked with the school’s staff from 2000 to 2009, with a one-year hiatus. From that coaching effort, Kean said, the school found a way to create a more positive, higher-achieving environment for all kids.

The coach worked with the school leadership team to set goals, focus on data, and work with staff on collaborative planning. Both staff and students developed clear, measurable achievement targets. Teachers learned strategies such as reciprocal teaching and using graphic organizers. They taught the same skills at the same time and assessed student progress in the same way. They targeted instruction with small reading groups.

“There’s constantly so much pressure from all sides,” Kean said. “Coaching helped us focus on what’s important, see how what we were doing was reinforcing inequity versus transforming, and helped us clarify where we want to go.”

“Coaching is about developing your inner capacity. It’s about inquiry. What’s your current reality, what data tells you that, what goal do you have, what’s getting in the way, what do you want to try to make that different? Then, once you try, reflecting on it. What did you produce now? Are you closer to your goal? What’s the next strategy you’ll use? It’s about teaching people how to think and problem solve rather than giving people a prescription.

“Without coaching, we would have had no way out of the rut that we were in,” Kean said. “Coaching helped us look at patterns in data and how we were creating inequities. We’d been so in it that we hadn’t been able to see it clearly. Working with the coach, we had to ask, ‘Why do we think that’s happening? What do we think we can do about it? What’s our role as educators?’”

•
Valerie von Frank (valerievonfrank@aol.com) is an education writer and editor of NSDC’s books. ■

“There’s constantly so much pressure from all sides. Coaching helped us focus on what’s important, see how what we were doing was reinforcing inequity versus transforming, and helped us clarify where we want to go,” said Kimi Kean.

FEEDING RELATIONSHIPS

WORDS THAT WORK

Acknowledging the tremendous power of nonverbal communication and silence, this is a list of words that have worked for me and on me. Spoken with humility and curiosity, they tend to enrich my relationships.

- **I don't understand what you mean.**
- Say more.
- **Those earrings are gorgeous. You've got such a strong presence.**
- I don't know you very well, but you write really well, and I notice you're really important in the building. You seem like you're really focused on your goals, and you're a good friend to the people you care about.
- **You're quiet today.**
- What comes next for you, when you're done with school?
- **It's obvious you really want to graduate — you keep putting in your time — but you're also really struggling with that one teacher. That's got to be tough to balance.**
- I wonder what your goal was, what you were trying to accomplish.
- **May I take a look at that paper?**
- Would you do me a favor?
- **Please.**
- I'm sorry.
- **Thank you.**



A LARGE CUP *of* INSIGHT

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

By Daniel Horsey

A couple of years ago, a few minutes after watching a teacher and student spiral into what might be called a spirited discussion about respect, I made a mistake. Fifty-six years old, with a shiny new conflict resolution master's degree and 20 years of improv and facilitation experience, I thought I could handle a difficult dialogue. The student had been bounced out of his class, and I said something like, "Hey, Jeffrey. That thing, that argument that just happened with Carol (not their real names). You were saying she was being disrespectful to you, and that seems really important to me. Would you take some time, maybe this week, we can walk up the block and I'll buy you lunch or something, and help me understand what you meant?"

Big mistake. A few days later, we sat at a lunch counter while he analyzed their conversation for me, word by word and gesture by gesture. He walked me through the double meanings, the nonverbal cues, the role he played in that classroom, and the multiple relationships that were im-

pacted. I began to realize how little I knew, and I've been paying tuition — in fast-food lunches and chilled cups of over-sweet coffee for student after student — ever since.

The Academy of Urban Learning is a five-year-old charter school in Denver, Colo., that has grown to serve about 100 high school students. Started by entrepreneur and U.S. Rep. Jared Polis, D-Colo., to serve homeless youth, the school attempts to provide wraparound services to students with a variety of needs. The staff of 14 includes seven teachers (one covering special education), a guidance counselor and a social worker, one principal, his assistant, two security professionals, and me, the part-time, grant-funded, restorative justice coordinator. Our community convenes in a building with too-small classrooms, too-large common areas, a dungeon-like finished basement, a temperature-uncontrolled first floor, and an Internet connection that often — but not always — works.

Painfully slowly, my sugary investment in tuition is paying off. I'm learning that everyone comes with a voice, that I will never be able to predict or even understand what any-

First, we are human beings sharing equal relationships. Our roles as teachers and students, parents and staff, are subordinate.

one says, and that my own humility offers me the greatest opportunity to participate in this mysterious space. In other words, when I honor others with the same holy contemplation I reserve for myself, we may have the chance to serve each other.

Under the influence of any number of provocative thinkers, including Martin Buber, Paulo Freire, Dale Carnegie, U. Utah Phillips (and through him, Ammon Hennacy), Augusto Boal, James Comer, and even more influential, the people in our building — the Academy of Urban Learning is gradually disarming itself. Our policies are moving away from punishment and toward support, and our relationships are moving from the pyramidal and toward the flat. We've spent many professional development hours reflecting upon our own personal and professional relationships, defining their constructive and



"I'd like to believe the professional development sessions have inspired new behaviors," writes Daniel Horsey.

destructive characteristics, exploring signs of relational flux, and developing specific skills to be more present and intentional. Interactions with students and among staff members, especially during challenging moments, are more apt to start with apologies and appreciations than commands and threats.

Though our policies continue to change to reflect our more supportive atmosphere, we haven't adopted any particular behavioral program. Certain words — "program" and "staff" among them — make many of our students twitch. Ask why, and they'll talk about rules and regulations, the same old stuff, people who just don't get it. Many have spent time in Denver's Gilliam Youth Services Center, and they parse more quickly than I the puzzling twists and turns of the English language. Gilliam's attendees haven't felt served, and they sense the dehumanizing qualities of the best-intentioned program. Instead of focusing on programs, staff and students are learning to trust our humanity and

to respond to each person and situation in ways we ourselves appreciate: with empathy, understanding, boundaries, support, and other pillars of positive relationships.

Several elements have contributed to our learning. I've facilitated several hours of professional development during the past three years, and I've drawn on the principles of dialogue and storytelling and improvisational theater to elicit our existing values. Then we can evaluate policies and choose behaviors based on our core beliefs and the school's stated core values:

community, academics, respect, and empowerment. In the heat of a difficult moment, old, power-based responses can recur, but with time, continued practice, and reflective conversations, our relationship orientation is taking hold. Staff members are uniformly saintly in their patience with me and their willingness to experiment, reflect, co-create, and engage hopefully in collaborative change.

I'd like to believe the professional development sessions have inspired new behaviors for us all. Realistically, I believe change happens over time and that the primary function of our training sessions has been to keep us focused on intentional relationships. As I prowl the building each day, our shared experiences during professional development allow me to help teachers and others process difficult interactions, first by venting and then by considering different ways they might approach similar situations in the future.

The knowledge that power struggles don't usually work, a developing understanding of positive relationships, and our ongoing search for skill-based techniques for improving interactions, combined with schoolwide reflection and support, are making change possible.

As a staff, we are integrating more reflective moments into regular meetings, providing opportunities to exchange sensitivities and techniques. Updates about individual students include time to talk about words and nonverbals that deepen specific relationships more than simply control and pacify. We're becoming better able to ask each other for ideas, to give and to receive suggestions, and even to engage in mutually critical analyses. We're developing specific formats where we can learn from each other. Even our restorative practices, including mediation, serve understanding and mutual learning more than a court-like power structure.

These practices form the core of our perspective on social justice: First, we are human beings sharing equal relationships. Our roles as teachers and students, parents and staff, are subordinate.

One of my own guiding questions, still unanswered, is, "Who defines justice?" Many of our school's students live with poverty, abuse, racism, and hopelessness in a world I consider unjust. Should we, devoted to self-determination, accept the worldview some of them hold, that college and traditional success just isn't for them? Faithful to our belief that we can overcome, should we frame their education as a hero's journey away from much of what they've lived and toward our vision of some progressive future? Can we base our own actions in the classroom and throughout the building on the school's core values, or are our good intentions buttressed by the underlying values of power and enforcement? These are important questions, but

Some days I'm confident, and my cheer overruns that internal space that might be filled with another's presence. Days later, my inadequacies overwhelm, and the weight of others' emotions invades my psychic space, stunning me to passivity.

less important than they might appear. If all of our stakeholders are human beings sharing equal relationships, these questions are exercises that don't make much sense. In partnership, we're more likely to ask how someone is doing and discover what he or she needs. In troubled situations, we offer our time, talent, and resources on their terms, and accept the same from them. Should our school be different?

True collaborative partnership is shockingly difficult in practice. We work regularly on specific techniques — see the list on p. 26 for a few basic examples — but my own challenge is to transcend technique and move toward a form of humility where all voices, mine and others, are holy. I suspect others struggle similarly. Some days I'm confident, and my cheer overruns that internal space that might be filled with another's presence. Days later, my inadequacies overwhelm, and the weight of others' emotions invades my psychic space, stunning me to passivity. Minute by minute, boundaries waver, empathy confuses itself with caring, my faith in my private sense of right and wrong or good and bad imposes itself on others, and I wonder what purpose I serve in our community.

Those demons are my own. I assume — and, for my own comfort, I hope — you have yours. Thankfully, professional development can offer us a compass, an integrated framework of values and techniques that provides a goal and the tools to move forward. When professional development works this way, it can also reinforce the concept that we, our students, their parents and guardians, and the community at large share more than we might assume. We each overcome some challenges and fall to others, survive as best we can, and strive to take our personal next steps. Professional learning that allows for our authentic

participation and provides real relationship skills applicable in varied and multicultural environments can help us take those steps.

Jeffrey and I have been texting as I type. He missed a day of school this week because his guardian ad litem asked him to address a gathering of attorneys. "jus got done speakin again," he writes. "i think ima be famous by the end of the night." He only cussed out a teacher a few times during the first trimester of 2009-10, and he completed more projects in those three months than he had in the previous two years. These days, he's more apt to use his performer's persona to encourage rather than to distract. The changes are probably more developmental than the result of any conversation or sticky coffee drink. And yet, during his graduation, I expect to be torn up. I've learned far more than he in the past few years, much of it from him, and at my age, very little of it was developmental. Years of education, workshops taken and taught, and courageous colleagues have helped me learn how to learn. Nurturing that capacity is one of professional development's invaluable gifts.

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Thankfully, professional development can offer us a compass, an integrated framework of values and techniques that provides a goal and the tools to move forward.

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TBC's program provided a leadership structure that increased my time in classrooms to monitor instruction, support teachers, and provide essential professional development aligned to the immediate needs of my students and teachers. As a result, our school attained National NCLB Blue Ribbon status and has become a model for other inner city schools at closing the achievement gap.

– Kathy Greider, Past Principal, Dwight Elementary, Hartford, CT

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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

In working toward social justice in schools, we encounter people at different places on the continuum. Educators in our large, primarily white, suburban school district — Parkway School District in St. Louis, Mo. — range from the resistant to the eager reformer. Our challenge over the last year has been to address the data and move our staff to a place where we can say that we will reach and teach all children.

A key component to eliminating the achievement gap is building relationships between educators and students of color. The majority of teachers in the district are white, and they are responsible for teaching all students. If African-American students do not believe that teachers care about them, they are less likely to work for their teachers. Therefore, we help white teachers understand how to build relationships with African-American students in particular. A good relationship includes holding all students to the highest expectations, not lowering standards. Teachers with good relationships also work to understand and accept students' culture.



Parkway is not new to diversity work. Years ago, a small group of staff began what Peggy McIntosh calls the second phase of curricular revision with regard to race: “White history with examples of outstanding achievement by persons of color: I tell the stories, but I may include you” (McIntosh, 1990). (See box at right). Our primarily white demographics had made us blind to the staff and students of color. As our Pupil Personnel Department worked to raise awareness, we moved from the “all children are special ... I don’t see color” stage to a celebration of our limited diversity.

Over time, our demographics changed to include more African-American, Latino, and Indian students. About 30% of our 18,000 students identify as students of color. However, our staff ratio didn’t keep up the pace. Only about 6% of our staff are people of color and fewer than 3% of our administrators are people of color. So, even though we were visibly supportive of diversity in our schools — we hung the right posters, we bought culturally relevant literature for our bookshelves, and we studied the outstanding representatives of our minority populations — we were still enmeshed in a culture of white privilege.

Two years ago, our illusions began to unravel. No Child Left Behind illuminated the gaps in our structure. Our Adequate Yearly Progress scores showed achievement gaps between white and other students. We had to face the inadequacies of our strategies to meet the needs of students of color, students with IEPs, and students who receive free and reduced lunch. Our 2009 annual test data show that fewer than 20% of our African-American students and fewer than 33% of our Hispanic students (compared to 61% of our white students) were scoring proficient or advanced. The number of students with IEPs who scored proficient or advanced was less than 35%, whereas about 60% of our non-IEP students scored in the top two levels. Fewer than half as many students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch score proficient or advanced compared to our students who are not eligible. Clearly, there are problems.

CHANGING CULTURE COMES FIRST

Over the next two years, district leadership began to recognize the need for major systemic change in our curriculum and pedagogy. Perhaps the most important factor in mobilizing the district came from the top. Our superintendent attended a week-long residential training academy on social justice and came back ready to support the changes we needed to make our district responsive to all students.

The first step to major change was to examine and re-vamp our culture and climate. We knew we needed to expand diversity learning opportunities to include all staff, not just the few who volunteered. Our learning opportunities moved from personal awareness workshops for a handful of people to comprehensive social justice retreats for all

PHASES OF CURRICULAR REVISION WITH REGARD TO RACE

1. **White history:** The world is centered on my experience, and I tell the stories.
2. **White history with examples of outstanding achievement by persons of color:** I tell the stories, but I may include you.
3. **People of color as a problem, anomaly, or absence in history:** My narratives center on the ways you have challenged my authority or dominance.
4. **People of color as history:** I listen as you tell your version of the stories.
5. **History redefined or reconstructed to include us all:** The stories are only complete when we all have spoken.

Source: McIntosh, 1990.



district administrators and building principals. All administrators were required to attend a two-day social justice cohort and four follow-up days with our external experts, Education Equity Consultants. Each cohort participates in a small ally group to continue learning. Our superintendent not only supports this initiative financially but participated in one of the cohorts, as did a board member. Because of the top-down support of social justice in the district, we are now teaching teacher leaders from all 28 schools in order to build a cadre of people in each building who have participated in social justice training.

We added to our summer diversity workshops for second-year teachers so that we now follow up with a two-year induction training in diversity as part of our year 2 and 3 teacher cohort groups. Additionally, day-long workshops brought together bus drivers, building facilities employees, and building leaders who chaired diversity programs in each building. This will improve the ability of all staff to meet all students’ needs.

CREATING RESPONSIVE INSTRUCTION

At the same time that the district supported increased social justice training for all staff, we also moved into the third of McIntosh’s five phases for classroom instruction: “People of color as a problem, anomaly, or absence in history: My narratives center on the ways you have challenged my authority or dominance” (McIntosh, 1990). We could be culturally responsive people, but we needed also to be culturally responsive teachers. McIntosh outlines the switch that happens in this phase, when we began to see the ways

If this student had not been in a fight, he would have become a statistic

As an African-American administrator in the district, I am often reminded that I am different from the majority. As an adult, my life experiences have helped me to navigate through difficult times. However, I often think about the students of color who could be experiencing some of the same issues I have faced, but without the life experiences to help them deal with these challenges. That reminder helps me stay focused on our goals as a district: To raise all children up so that they feel a sense of belonging to their school and their education, and so that they are able to reach their full potential as learners and citizens of a multicultural and diverse world.

One story highlights my learning journey. We realized that Parkway's academic data weren't the only alarming indicators that we were failing students. Student discipline data also highlighted stark disparities. Although African-Americans made up only 16% of the student population, their suspension rate was higher than any other student group. We said we were

meeting the needs of all students, but the truth was in the data.

Students who are suspended must attend a hearing with the Discipline Review Committee. There was one African-American male on this committee and, when I joined, I noticed that he stayed silent for fear of losing his job. I also noticed the difference between the lengths of time out of school that African-American students received compared to their white counterparts. The language used to describe the incidents was more inflammatory for African-Americans than whites. I began addressing other red flags I saw in the discipline packet prepared by administrators. The packet contained information such as the student's grades, test scores, attendance, and the record of interventions.

One student's visit to the District Review Committee is unforgettable and clearly indicated to me that

The language used to describe the incidents was more inflammatory for African-Americans than whites.



Charlotte Ijei

underperforming African-American students flew under the radar unless they had discipline issues. A student entered the room and quietly said how sorry he was for fighting. He was facing suspension or expulsion, but the administrator explained to the committee before the family came in that this student was a great young man and had a clean discipline history.

As I looked through the student's file, I began to see a bigger problem. This 11th grader had only earned nine credits toward graduation. At that point, he should have earned at least 17.5 credits. I also saw that this student had been struggling in reading since elementary school. I asked: "Has this student been helped by our care team? Have you seen this student's standardized

test scores? What interventions have been put in place to help this student succeed?" I was more interested in our culpability for the lack of support that led him to a violent expression of his frustration than for the responsibility we were asking him to take for his failure to make adequate academic progress. I realized that if this student had NOT gotten into a fight, he would have become another statistic. This incident turned out to be a good thing because it forced the system to work for him instead of against him. He began receiving the services he needed to recover credits and improve his chances to graduate with his classmates.

After this and other incidents, I took a look at the bigger picture. As I expected, this student's case was more the rule than the exception. We needed to look at our culturally unresponsive climate and find a way to train as many administrators and teachers in social justice in the shortest amount of time as possible. We did not have time to waste — students' futures were at risk.

— Charlotte Ijei

African-American academic struggles cause us to question the existing curricular foundations. Board policy now includes social justice expectations, and our district progress monitoring teams, literacy coaches, and data teams are accountable for ensuring that we are intentionally working to narrow the achievement gap. Our Diversity in Action district committee, made up of administrators, teachers and counselors, oversees, coordinates,

and develops academic initiatives for the district. A Diversity in Action teacher leader in each school is paid a stipend for taking district work back into each building.

Administrators recognized that the achievement gap was not the result of student deficit as much as ineffective teaching strategies. This switch in perspectives allowed us to ask what we could do differently so that our teaching reached our kids, not what

we needed our students to do differently so that they could catch what we were throwing at them. Instruction included thoughtful attention to the five best practices outlined by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE) standards for effective pedagogy (see box at right). We sought to use instructional group activities in which students and teacher work together to create a product or idea. We consciously applied literacy strategies to develop language competence in all subject areas. We engaged in professional development to begin to contextualize teaching and curriculum in students' existing experiences in home, community, and school. District task forces on diversity advocated for the implementation of challenging standards for student performance. Specifically, we recognized the need to be more effective in identifying capable African-American learners and then to hold them to high standards of rigor. And we examined data that indicated the effectiveness of our teaching strategies, which has led us to craft instruction through academic, goal-directed, small-group conversations rather than through lectures.

At the same time, we coupled professional development on the Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE) standards with district implementation of an Un-

THE CREDE STANDARDS FOR EFFECTIVE PEDAGOGY AND LEARNING

- 1. Joint productive activity:** Teacher and students producing together.
- 2. Language development:** Developing language and literacy across the curriculum.
- 3. Contextualization:** Making meaning: Connecting school to students' lives.
- 4. Challenging activities:** Teaching complex thinking.
- 5. Instructional conversation:** Teaching through conversation.

Source: CREDE, n.d.

derstanding by Design (UbD) model. Looking at everything with backwards design in mind led us to rewrite our mission statement and our curriculum across all disciplines. UbD forced us to put students in the center of everything we were doing.

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ENGAGING STUDENTS IN THE MISSION

The third strand of change that we pursued, along with social justice learning for staff and specific academic initiatives for African-American students, targeted students themselves with a variety of social justice trainings. In addition to the general counseling curriculum, a core team of district counselors presented respect and responsibility workshops to the district’s 4th, 6th, and 10th graders. High school leadership groups brought together students who would take the learning back to their schools. As primary stakeholders, students need to take ownership for their learning. If we believe that students are at the center of our mission, they need to be aware of our intent and have a voice in evaluating our efforts. We purposefully named our student social justice training “Honoring All Voices” because we want to empower students to speak their truth.

Using social justice programs to hire and train culturally diverse and sensitive staff, demonstrating curriculum best practices that focus all learning on effective student achievement, and including students as the most important stakeholders of our district educational infrastructure all contribute to the achievement of our mission. Equity that is embedded in all layers of our schools becomes a vehicle to achieve our student-

focused mission, not as an add-on initiative. Now when we say that we develop “remarkably capable, curious, and confident learners who are well-equipped to understand and respond to the challenges of an ever-changing, complex world,” we feel comfortable that we mean *all* of our learners.

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TRADITION BECOMES THE TEACHER

COMMUNITY EVENTS ENRICH EDUCATORS' PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

By Margery Ginsberg and Anthony Craig

One way to approach the improvement of instruction is for educators to learn from student interactions in cultural events that fully engage students' motivation and curiosity. In such a context, educators get to know students in new ways and to connect student strengths to classroom instruction. This can be especially powerful when the learning context is a shared and collaborative experience among educators.

Two elementary school staffs came together to learn from the interactions of American Indian students and families through participation in the Tulalip Tribes' Salmon Ceremony. Such cultural events in communities throughout the United States have the potential to stimulate new ideas for teachers to create more inclusive, relevant, and engaging learning environments.

Although we are cautious about educators making hasty conclusions about entire groups of people from limited interactions, we believe that, with knowledgeable community members and elders as guides, significant community events provide educators with opportunities to understand expectations and interactions in ways that might not be possible otherwise. The implications for teaching and learning in schools are profound.

BACKGROUND

As is true for many school districts, the teachers in Marysville School District in Washington state, most of European-American descent, teach students from communities where the process of socialization generally differs from educators' own childhood experiences. With this in mind, Marysville School District has focused a portion of teachers' professional learning on ways to create greater congruence between the strengths that students exhibit in their communities and opportunities to learn in the more formal context of school. The importance of connecting the culture of the community to the culture of the classroom has

Drumbeats begin the annual

Salmon Ceremony of the

Tulalip Tribes of

Washington state.

Educators from two

elementary schools in

Marysville, Wash.,

studied and

attended the

ceremony to learn

from traditions

that serve

children

well.

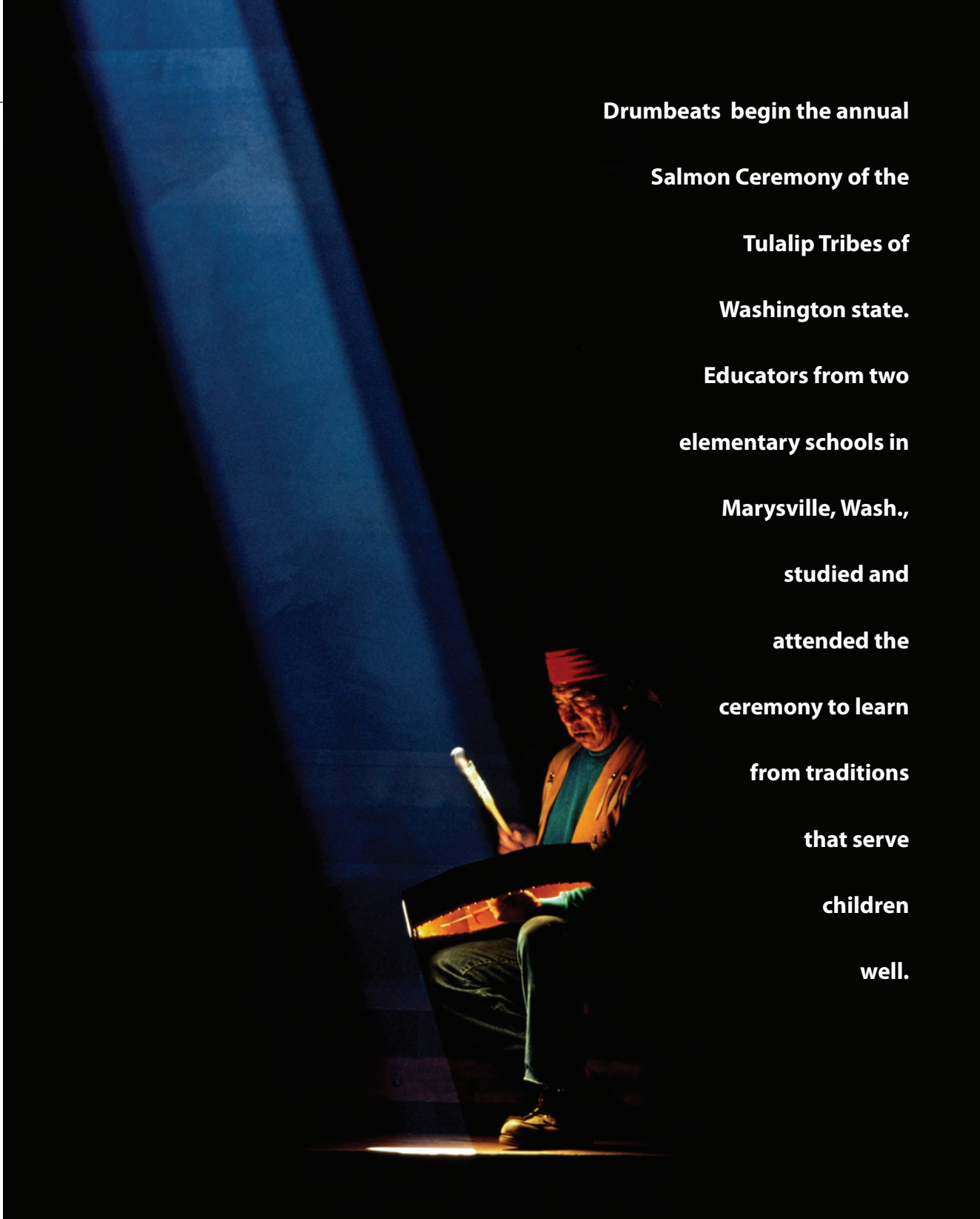


Photo by NATALIE FOBES/Getty Images

An elder drums at a Salmon Ceremony of the Tulalip Tribes in Washington state.

a well-established legacy in educational research (Vygotsky, 1978; Mohatt & Erikson, 1981; Heath, 1983; Au & Kawakami, 1985; Zeichner, 1995; Gay, 2000). In addition to the potential of such connections for democratic pluralism, scholars and practitioners commonly agree that help-

ing students to bridge the participation structures in their homes and communities with the structures found in most classrooms is foundational to academic success.

As authors, we also believe that collaborative learning among teachers in a shared context can build a collective

commitment to instructional innovation. One of us has been an educator in American Indian communities and one is American Indian and currently teaches in an Indian community. Ultimately, our hope is to encourage pedagogical imagination without reducing children and community members to static

lists of presumed characteristics and learning styles.

To guide the process of bridging community-school interests, Marysville School District, which serves the indigenous communities of the Tulalip Tribes, has established a district-level RESPECT committee. The goal of this committee is to strengthen the districts' commitment to equitable student performance. With a focus on teaching and learning that is inclusive, relevant, engaging, and valuable to learners and families, the committee recognizes that content-focused instruction is insufficient without a fundamental awareness of and respect for learner diversity and motivation. Marysville recognizes that opportunities for teachers to strengthen their cultural awareness require reaching outside of the usual context of professional development. In particular,

community gatherings can be valuable occasions to learn from traditions that have historically served children well.

Here we describe one of several ways that schools and districts can develop a professional learning agenda focused on attending community events to build upon teachers' understanding of children's strengths. Although our example focuses on how and what teachers learned from attending a significant ceremonial event, the Tulalip experience sheds light on professional learning opportunities that exist in communities everywhere.

ORIENTATION TO A COMMUNITY GATHERING

To reach out to local educators, a member of the district's RESPECT committee (one of the authors) drafted an invitation to educators in two elementary schools to attend the practice session for the Tulalip community's annual Salmon Ceremony and the actual ceremony. The invitation set the stage for learning from students' cultural context and stressed the importance of the Salmon Ceremony to the Tulalip community.

Educators from both elementary schools responded to the invitation with resounding interest. In nearly full attendance, teachers and school administrators gathered for a four-hour preliminary session to learn about the ceremony and to develop a focus to guide their own instructional understanding and imagination.

Educators from both elementary schools responded to the invitation with resounding interest. In nearly full attendance, teachers and school administrators gathered for a four-hour preliminary session to learn about the ceremony and to develop a focus to guide their own instructional understanding and imagination.

WHAT ARE THE CHILDREN LEARNING?

To sharpen teachers' focus on student strengths and knowledge, the initial learning agenda included a 10-minute video clip of a previous ceremony. As educators watched, they were asked to keep in mind the questions, "What can you tell about what the children are learning, and how? What are some of the strengths that children exhibit that might have implications for teaching and learning?" The videotaped ceremony stimulated discussion for participants.



This description captures elements of the videotaped ceremony practice.

As the familiar drumbeat of the Snohomish Welcome Song begins, 100 singers and drummers enter the Tulalip Longhouse.

As is traditional, three head women lead the procession, followed by the eldest male drummers beating their hand drums and raising their hands to greet and thank all visitors who have come to lend support as tribal members pay honor to the first returning King Salmon of the season.

Intermingled among these elder drummers, singers, and dancers, one sees dozens of young children ranging in age from toddler to teen joining in with a focused reverence. As the ceremony unfolds, not a single participant, adult or child, steps out of line. Each participant appears to feel a responsibility for this important work. Every song, dance, and story compels tribal members of all ages to sing and dance in order to conduct the ceremony as it has been for generations.

The beauty and power of ancient songs and dances come alive in the young children as they dance around the three sacred fires on the dirt floor of the longhouse. The importance of the youth in the survival of this culture is evident as this short video clip comes to a close.

Inclusion

RESPECT AND CONNECTEDNESS

A TEACHING RUBRIC

	Clear evidence	Possible evidence	No evidence at this time	Ideas/ questions	Connection to learning from community culture
Routines and rituals are present that contribute to respectful learning (e.g. norms are clear, cooperative learning).					
Students and teachers comfortably and respectfully interact with each other for social and academic support (students support each other's learning).					
Students and teachers share a relationship that may be subtle (e.g. students share thinking, humor used mutually).					
Teacher arranges activities to allow for closeness and independence.					
Teacher acknowledges students' identities and membership in cultural groups					

Source: Marysville (Wash.) School District, adapted from Ginsberg (2003).

<p>MORE TOOLS ONLINE</p> <p>www.nsd.org/news/jsd/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invitation for educators to the ceremony. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda for the initial learning experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rubrics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attitude: <i>Choice and personal/cultural relevance.</i> - Meaning: <i>Challenge and engagement.</i> - Competence: <i>Authenticity and effectiveness.</i>
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Seeking to create for teachers the same conditions for learning that we seek for students, the goals for the initial teacher preparation session, participation in the Salmon Ceremony, and the follow-up debrief were to develop an understanding of Tulalip First Salmon Ceremony, establish common understanding regarding the potential of a community context as a site for learning, and experience a community gathering to learn more about

cultural strengths, talents, and values to integrate with teaching and learning in classrooms.

The agenda for the initial professional learning clarified the purpose, what participants would be able to know and do as a result of the learning, and the resource materials available to inform their thinking. Among the materials was an article from *Educational Leadership* entitled “Lessons at the Kitchen Table,” (Ginsberg, 2007). The article served as an entry point into a discussion on what to look for at the Salmon Ceremony and the importance of a focus on community strengths or funds of knowledge (Gonzales, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Awareness of such strengths can yield valuable clues for how teachers might further develop their own classroom expectations and learning interactions

with students. For example, a strength that a teacher of young children might notice as part of the Salmon Ceremony are the clear norms of collaboration that are demonstrated by elders and youth for younger children who are learning ceremonial protocol. Teachers might also notice various forms of narration throughout the ceremony — for example, the use of story, song, and movement.

PRACTICE CEREMONY FOLLOW-UP

Following the practice for the Salmon Ceremony, one of the authors sent a letter thanking teachers for being present and showing their enthusiasm and love for students and the community. As several participants noted, it had been a great evening, full of learning and culture. The letter included comments from the families about their children’s excitement to see their teachers: “They were so proud to tell anybody who would listen, ‘That’s my teacher!’ and ‘My teacher is here!’ ”

The letter also included an approach for teachers who would attend the actual ceremony. Underscoring the privilege of going behind the scenes of this ancient ceremony, teachers were asked to focus on how children are taught and the high expectations that are held for them. They were also asked to record their thoughts after the ceremony to aid their collective mem-

ory for a follow-up discussion where participants would apply insights to instructional practice.

Setting the stage for educators to learn from a community gathering was, in some ways, easier than developing a follow-up session to make sense of and apply insights to classroom environments. Most teachers are willing to extend themselves beyond the boundaries of the schoolhouse if they believe there will be a way to use experiences to construct more effective classrooms. However, the easiest initial bridges to build after attending any event are often the superficial ones. Clearly, being an attentive witness does not necessarily translate into being a discerning interpreter. At the same time, with guidance from community members, thinking through some of the threads of a story can lead to understanding aspects of students’ potential that can be forgotten in the rush of a school day.

APPLYING INSIGHTS FROM CULTURAL EVENTS

During the initial learning, we asked teachers to list their observations and insights after seeing the practice ceremony video clip. After attending the practice ceremony in person, or, for some teachers, the actual ceremony, teachers replicated this in a personal journal or with a partner. As we interacted with teachers over the following weeks, we noted a range of teacher observations from the ceremony about positive student learning and the environmental conditions that supported it. The list included:

- Clear norms and predictable routines;
- Structured participation that allowed for approximation;
- Repetition;
- Children have a clear understanding of events without explicit lectures;
- Young children watching and learning from older youth and elders;
- Close proximity of children to adults;
- Multiple roles and forms of participation;
- Well-modeled, interactive, and respectful participation;
- Voices — everyone sings;
- Physical movement;
- No distinction among who belongs to whom;
- Various stories with examples of the ethic of “no enemies”; and
- The use of rhythm in transitions.

We used this list and its insights to revise teaching rubrics based on generic ideas about supporting intrinsic motivation across student groups. Our goal was to assist teachers in providing instruction that is motivating and culturally responsive. Although classrooms may not elicit children’s intrinsic motivation in ways that are similar to a community’s deep collective memory and norms, they can approximate the conditions upon which children’s learning thrives.

We planned to take the revised rubrics to a concluding gathering with teachers, where we could apply the revised rubrics to

During the initial learning, we asked teachers to list their observations and insights after seeing the practice ceremony video clip. After attending the practice ceremony in person, or, for some teachers, the actual ceremony, teachers replicated this in a personal journal or with a partner.

a videotaped elementary school literacy lesson to apply the professional learning to ongoing instruction and reconsider classroom practices. One of the teachers had volunteered to have one of her lessons with students taped and to reflect with the group on the lesson. (See one example of a revised rubric on p. 39.)

“NOTICINGS” AND “WONDERS”

After watching the video of the classroom lesson and using the rubrics to assess the lesson, teachers offered feedback for each category. Their feedback was communicated as “noticings” and “wonders” on a two-column chart. “Noticings” are attributes of the lesson that clearly connect to student motivation. “Wonders” are probing questions that allow teachers to think more deeply about their practice.

Following the video, teachers noted the high student energy, concentration, and effort they saw during the lesson. Teachers believed that the revised rubrics were more congruent with the tribal communities’ values and norms. Changes within the rubric included new considerations regarding multiple opportunities for children to learn, based on observations of the ceremony that included repetition, learning from elders and older youth, singing, physical movement, various stories, and ways of developing collective memory. Another set of changes to the rubrics focused on expectations of success, based on observations such as clear demonstrations of expectations, use of approximation, lack of distinction among who belongs to whom, and the example of elders as committed learners.

EXTENDING NEW LEARNING WITHOUT A BLUEPRINT

Most teachers were able to watch the ceremony practice video, attend the practice for the ceremony, and attend the ceremony itself. Reflecting on the importance of these experiences as educators, they spoke of the potential of community learning to evoke memory, emotion, and new learning. They also indicated an interest in extending the use of the rubrics to their own professional practice. For example, several teachers mentioned that they would like to strengthen their knowledge of motivation and culture through collaborative lesson design, co-teaching, and peer-feedback with American Indian colleagues.

Educational researchers and theorists are clear about the importance of instruction on student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Brophy, 2004; Gay, 2000). They are also clear that culture and motivation are inseparable from learning (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000). At a time when there are many frameworks and approaches to implement them, there are still no blueprints for understanding and improving upon the cultural nuance of classroom norms and interactions. Fortunately, there are communities willing to help us learn.

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By Alison Cook-Sather

THROUGH STUDENTS' EYES

Students offer fresh insights into social justice issues in schools



Like most policies and practices in education, agendas for achieving social justice in classrooms are defined and pursued by adults. Missing are the perspectives of those most directly affected by what educators decide and do: students. Research tells educators how to support diverse students' learning and thus to foster more equal opportunities for school success. Methods include building teaching approaches around themes that are relevant to and that emerge from students' own lives, developing well-informed strategies for countering discriminatory and exclusionary tendencies in education, and creating situations within which students feel empowered and motivated to participate constructively in their schooling. But students are best positioned to teach educators how to construct such approaches, strategies, and situations. Only students can tell educators what it feels like to experience those conditions (and not to experience them), how and when to implement them to greatest effect, and what else might support or hinder their learning. Without student perspectives, educators have only theories. By accessing their perspectives, educators afford themselves an opportunity to learn from and with students how to create learning opportunities that support their school success.

A recent comprehensive analysis of secondary students'

perspectives on their schooling offers insight into what supports and hinders diverse students' learning and provides examples of approaches used by teachers and school leaders in different contexts to access their own students' experiences of and perspectives on school (Cook-Sather, 2009). This analysis yielded important information for teachers, teacher leaders, and others who want to create opportunities to learn from students how best to support student learning and thus how to define and pursue social justice in schools in a more informed way.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Educators who may feel daunted by the prospect of engaging students in discussions about how to meet their diverse learning needs should be reassured by the following:

- **Student perspectives align with educational theory.**

Student recommendations for approaches to classroom management, pedagogical strategies, and other areas central to teaching echo some of the principles of constructivist, critical, feminist, and equity approaches and highlight recurrent themes at the heart of what social justice might look like in schools: meaningful relationships, respect, and an equal opportunity for students to take responsibility for their learning and their lives.

- **Students' suggestions are constructive.**

Researchers in England suggest that, while it is understandable that teachers might worry that consulting stu-

dents could unleash “a barrage of criticism of them and their teaching,” they find that that is not usually the case. They explain: “In our experience, most [students] criticize the task or the procedures rather than the teacher, and their commentaries are often very constructive” (Rudduck & Flutter, 2004, p. 75).

- **Learning from the student’s perspective is ongoing.**

No educator ever learns once and for all what the student perspective is and what works for learners. Rather, educators

need to engage in an ongoing process of learning how best to support each new individual student and group of learners within each particular educational context. Far from being a daunting prospect, this fact should be reassuring — giving both inexperienced and experienced educators permission and encouragement to continue to learn, just as they ask students to engage in ongoing learning.

Like any effort toward greater equity, consulting students about what they need to learn is a process of building mutual trust and respect.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Like any effort toward greater equity, consulting students about what they need to learn is a process of building mutual trust and respect. Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) used findings from research projects in England and New Zealand to derive the following principles that educators can use to plan how to consult students — that is, engage them in discussion about their perspectives and opinions.

- **Be sure you are committed not only to listening but also to responding.**

Educators should consult students only if they have a genuine desire to hear what students have to say and a firm commitment to try to use what students say to improve teaching and learning in classrooms.

- **Be prepared to explain your purpose and focus.**

Educators should explain clearly to students the purpose and focus of the consultation, making clear how, and why, if appropriate, they were selected for consultation and what will happen to what they say, including the educator’s own willingness to be influenced by what students say as well as by other necessary considerations.

- **Create conditions for dialogue.**

The conditions of dialogue — in which we listen to and learn from each other in new ways — make the consultation productive. When educators view students as active participants in conversations about teaching and learning and their voices are included as part of an ongoing discussion (Lodge, 2005), students and adults can move past the status quo in ways of thinking about and doing school and talk openly about new possibilities.

- **Choose methods that focus on deepening understanding.**

The methods of consultation used should be chosen to

deepen educators’ understanding of students’ experiences of teaching and learning in classrooms and the school as a whole. For instance, sentence completion activities, such as, “I wish teachers would ...” and “I wish teachers wouldn’t ...” (Demetriou, 2009, p. 82) offer educators insight into student perspectives on teaching practices. Questions such as “Have you ever been in a situation where you’re learning from other students, not just from the teacher? If so, how did that happen? (Did the teacher’s actions have anything to do with it?)” (Cushman, 2009, p. 108) prompt students to draw on a wider range of experiences to illuminate their learning needs. (See Cushman, 2009, and Demetriou, 2009, for more examples.)

- **Give students feedback.**

After consultation, students need feedback on how what they have said has been understood and on how it will influence or has influenced educator planning and actions.

- **Be realistic.**

Student consultation needs to be planned realistically from the beginning, with particular attention to the time and energy needed for all phases of it.

POTENTIAL DANGERS

Following the guiding principles above will help make consultation a responsible and productive process. In addition, keep in mind and work to avoid some of the dangers of consulting students that can undermine work toward greater social justice.

- **Listening to students should not be about indulging or exploiting them.**

There is the danger in careless approaches to consulting students of seeming to attend to but ultimately dismissing what students have to say. Likewise, student perspectives should not simply be considered an embellishment to what adults already think. Even well-intentioned efforts to access student perspectives can backfire when student voice is not genuinely attended to and when students are not, or feel they are not, a part of the change process.

- **There is no single or unified student voice.**

Educators attempting to access student perspectives need to guard against overlooking essential differences among students, their perspectives, and their needs. Those committed to productive listening to and learning from students’ perspectives must work hard not to reduce students’ comments and insights to any single, fixed experience or simply assume that students can and will speak for themselves in uncomplicated ways.

- **The rhetoric of student voice work must match the reality.**

Some advocates of accessing student perspectives are concerned that oversimplifying the issues involved in changing school culture to make it more responsive to students will lead to tokenism, manipulation, and practices that don’t match the rhetoric. There must be congruence between the claims and the practices that follow, and educators must constantly revisit the goal of equalizing access.

REMINDERS

Because students' perspectives are often different from educators' perspectives, taking the step toward social justice advocated here requires attention to these differences and how to embrace and engage them constructively.

- **Be open to students' perspectives and students' meanings.**

Students see from a different angle than adults, and they might mean different things by the words they use than what adults might mean. For example, one student used the word "lenient" to describe a classroom that felt safe and understanding to her. Educators may have pejorative associations with that term: lenient as not sufficiently strict or demanding, as too easy-going or even indulgent. This student, however, seemed to be highlighting the meanings of the term that emphasize compassion, tolerance, ease of being. There are many other examples. It is essential, therefore, to pay attention to what students say and try to imagine what they might mean, rather than adhere to adult meanings and associations, and, further, to be prepared to explore such terms with students. Ask students what they mean by such terms both to learn and to extend what they might mean to students and to us as educators.

- **Respond constructively to doubts, disagreements, and defensiveness you might feel.**

Because some of what students say will challenge educators' beliefs, and because some of what they say may conflict with educators' perspectives, it is essential for educators to pay close attention to their responses to what students have to say and, rather than becoming defensive or dismissive, educators should ask themselves what they could do to better understand student perspectives and help students better understand theirs. The challenge often lies in adults overcoming their own feelings as educators to recognize, understand, and accept the true feelings of students in order to work collaboratively to build a more meaningful learning environment. No matter what students feel, and whether the adults agree, it is a real feeling to the students, and educators must work with them as all participants in the conversation move beyond their limited perspectives. Turn doubt and disagreement into opportunity for further learning.

- **Consider how to help students gain insight into educators' experiences and perspectives.**

When educators consult students about their learning needs, and when that process of consultation is a genuine dialogue, students gain insight into and deeper understanding of the challenges teachers face.

One student explained that hearing about what prospective teachers struggle with "made me realize the teacher's point of view, like, I never really realized what they go through, that they even care about this" (Cook-Sather, 2009, p. 205).

These insights and understandings make students more empathetic and more willing to work with educators to make schools places where both educators and students can work to the best of their ability.

- **Collaborate with students to identify and work towards larger systemic changes.**

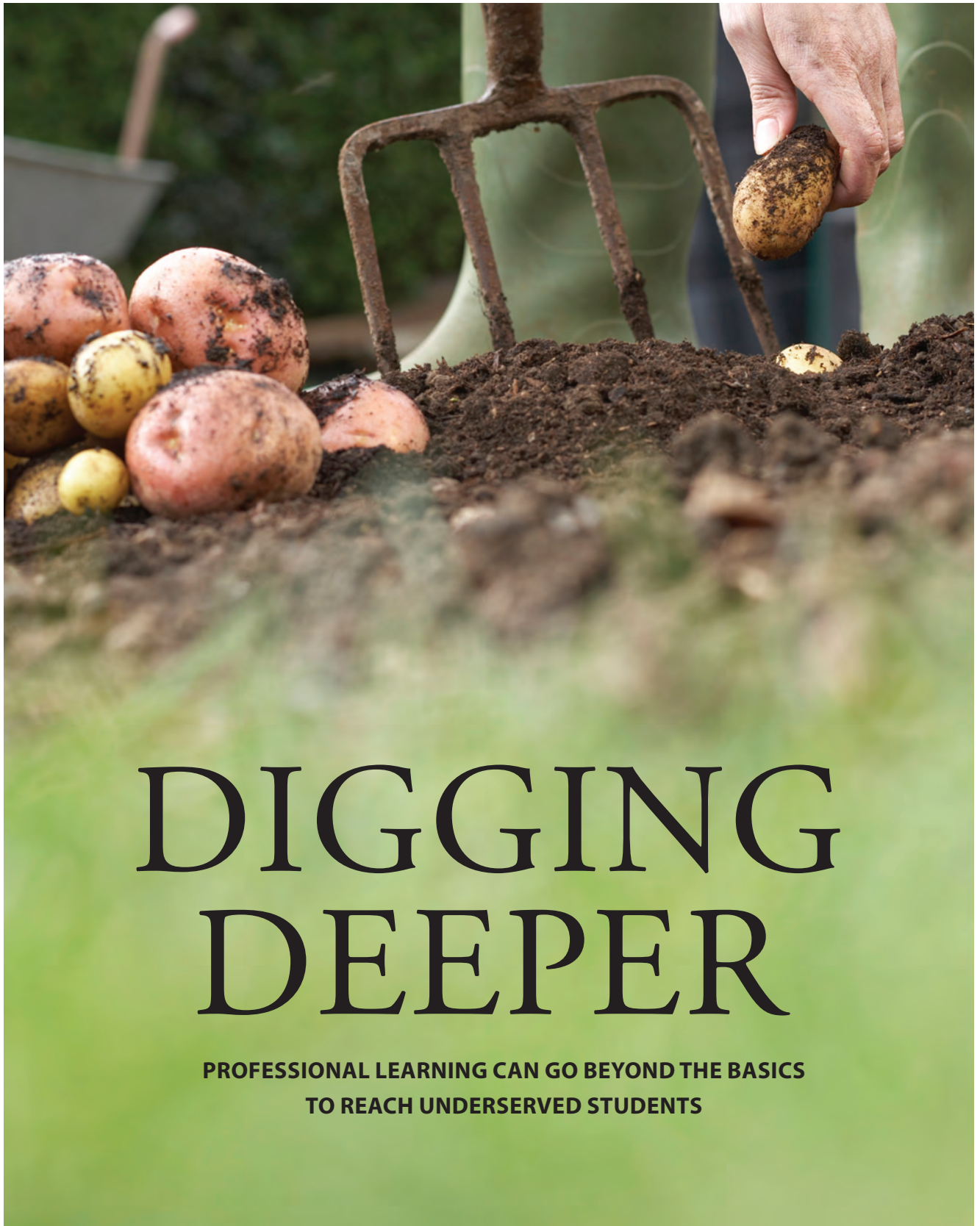
Student perspectives reveal the capacity students have to identify and articulate the struggles they experience and the hopes they have for their education. They also reveal the limitations of the student perspective, particularly regarding the larger systemic structures and strictures within which educators labor. The educator's role is to work with students to allow their voices to create a meaningful and constructive change well beyond the initial interaction. Thus a final challenge is how to collaborate with students to identify their needs and hopes, to help them see the larger system within which both students and teachers work, and to imagine together more effective ways to structure teaching and learning opportunities.

SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES

Accessing students' perspectives is a complex activity requiring a high degree of awareness and responsibility on the part of educators. And yet, "given the vastly unequal educational outcomes among students of different backgrounds, equalizing conditions for student learning needs to be at the core of a concern for diversity" (Nieto, 1999). Learning from students about their diverse learning needs and how to create classroom environments in which they can succeed can contribute to such equalizing.

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DIGGING DEEPER

**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CAN GO BEYOND THE BASICS
TO REACH UNDERSERVED STUDENTS**

By Sonia Caus Gleason

I've never heard an educator in a high-poverty school or district dispute whether his or her school needs to improve. The discussion is always about how and how much. And in all sorts of communities, while some people are satisfied with incremental improvements, others will not rest until every child experiences the nurturing and challenge he or she deserves. When we set our sights high for children, we believe that education facilitates social justice. School communities that are serious about improvement address the learning needs of students and adults. When educators pursue justice, they shape professional development, starting with the needs of the underserved in mind.

THE BASICS OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Consistent, excellent teaching is the single greatest factor in improving student achievement over time (Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Haycock, 1998). School leadership is the second (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Excellent teaching and strong leadership require deliberate, ongoing professional learning. In working with high-poverty school systems over time, the following basics emerge.

Time: Educators must have time to continually learn, build skills, and problem solve. Educators need answers to questions about students and learning, and knowledge about research-based instructional strategies. Systems and the educators in them must collect, analyze, and act upon data in timely ways. Professional learning should largely take place during the school day, and sometimes schools and districts will need to extend the day or year for learning.

Educators need the right kind of time. In some instances, teachers need to gather with colleagues in their grade or those teaching the same content. Other times, the entire community needs to come together to attend to schoolwide issues. Regularity and reliability of professional learning time will make progress possible.

Content: The content of professional learning needs to be relevant and rigorous. Educators increasingly identify professional learning through analyzing achievement data. They can pinpoint their learning needs in the areas where there are gaps. Content includes academic subject matter and instructional practices, cultural competency, the use of data to support improvement, how to collaborate, and leadership practices.

Appropriate processes: Schools must identify the appropriate processes that align with content to meet the needs of adult learners. Some professional learning takes place in community. Some learning can happen online, whereas teachers can only try new instructional practices in the classroom. At times, teachers may benefit from coaching and peer support. Discerning which approach fits a certain situation is a combination of science and art, requiring ongoing attention.

Supportive contexts: Both school and district leaders can maximize the value and impact of professional learning through supportive contexts. At the school level, formal and informal advocates for professional learning form a leadership team. School leaders protect the time, vision, and resources for the adult learning that needs to happen. They can keep the community faithful to the agenda, procure resources, and build communal trust. They seek evidence of improvement and identify ways to sustain and increase progress. Leaders also ward off distractions, develop schedules that allow for the right kind of time, and support the development of different collaborative groups. Only school leaders, whether individuals or teams, can navigate the range of professional learning and monitor its connection to learning goals. In the absence of leadership, professional learning is not likely to be coherent or have impact.

District leaders participate by providing resources and

UNDERSERVED AND MARGINALIZED STUDENTS ARE LIKELY TO BE:

- Economically poor;
- Immigrants;
- A traditional minority;
- English language learners;
- Students with special needs; or
- Some combination of the above.

BASIC COMPONENTS FOR SOLID, ONGOING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

<p>Content</p> <p>Relevant and rigorous, based on a range of student achievement and other data.</p>	<p>+ Appropriate processes</p> <p>Methods that work with the learners and goals at hand; continuous feedback and improvement.</p>	<p>+ Time</p> <p>Right amount of time, with the right people, when work is needed.</p>	<p>+ Supportive contexts</p> <p>Critical mass of adults willing to learn; supporters and policies that facilitate the complexity of each component.</p>	<p>= Solid, ongoing professional learning in schools</p>
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GOING DEEPER, TOWARD SOCIAL JUSTICE

Add three elements to the basic components above.

1. Design professional learning that focuses on students who have been traditionally underserved and marginalized.
2. Use solid data to understand students as people and as learners.
3. Measure impact based on impact of the underserved, and keep at it.



supporting the work, reducing bureaucratic tasks that divert school administrators from instructional leadership, and reducing principal turnover, which can keep reforms from having lasting impact. Districts also monitor for fidelity to both student and adult learning goals.

The basics of time, content, appropriate processes, and supportive contexts don't reliably coexist in schools without sustained intentions and attention from education leaders. The basics may come together for stretches of time when there is a focus on a particular achievement lag or a specific population. Such moments can be as ephemeral as the tenure of a superintendent or principal, or as temporary as a funding cycle. When we strive for social justice in schools, advocating for the basics of professional learning is part of the job.

BEYOND THE BASICS: PURSUING SOCIAL JUSTICE

While the basics of professional development are essential to achieve social justice, their existence does not ensure that justice will be served. Schools that intentionally pursue social justice hold basic tenets that frame how to design, understand, implement, and measure professional learning. They are:

1. **Design professional learning that focuses on students who have been traditionally underserved and marginalized.**

These students' needs are the first priority because they have benefitted from the system the least. In addressing student learning needs, and, subsequently, educator learning needs, schools consider the perspectives of students, their families, and educators who share students' backgrounds and experiences. School and district leaders who take this approach, regardless of their background, assert that the system cannot be a success until all

children are. This is more than rhetoric or sporadic acts of charity. There is evidence of this belief in every aspect of the school, including professional learning.

2. **Use solid data to understand students as people and as learners.**

Schools focused on social justice begin with understanding students as people, and such information is important to everyone working with students. What are their backgrounds? What are their perceptions and interests? What supports do they have at home? This information is essential alongside data about who students are as learners.

Regardless of how educators feel about No Child Left Behind, this legislation assures that we now systematically name underserved student groups and publicly account for who is not achieving. Every school now has data measuring achievement based on race, gender, special needs, and enrollment in programs for English language learners. While data collection, use, and indicators aren't perfect, we now have more data on different groups of students. Beyond trends, we need to understand individual students as learners, so schools focused on justice seek data from sources beyond high-stakes accountability measures, including benchmark assessments, common formative assessments, and daily and weekly assignments.

Data about students as people and as learners come together to indicate what students know and can do, where their areas of strength are, and how to help them onto a course of continual improvement. This information shapes professional learning.

3. **Measure impact based on the underserved, and keep at it.**

Schools pursuing social justice achieve a certain momentum

by examining indicators of success, listening for informal feedback, and determining the next move. Schools with this focus learn from the literature of data cycles and continuous improvement. Schools will continue to progress when they build and maintain a critical mass of advocates for social justice and ensure that some advocates serve in leadership roles. When schools or districts have policies and funding to support the cause, they will certainly benefit, but if not, their strategies in achieving social justice goals may have to shift. While schools must adhere to government requirements, those requirements don't limit how far these schools can reach. When educators start with the underserved in mind, determined to know their students and what they need, they invariably set the bar for success much higher. And they do not waver.

UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS AS PEOPLE

While policies may help or deter the effort, it is up to local educators to pursue social justice with fidelity. Educators begin this effort through knowing students and embracing their backgrounds. For example, let's say a school's demographic data indicates that 45% of the students are black. These students could be:

- Children of middle-class, college-educated African-Americans;
- Newcomers from Haiti with some formal schooling;
- Fourth-generation African-Americans whose ancestors were unsuccessful in school;
- Children from Nigeria with no schooling who only speak a little-known dialect; or
- Some combination of these and other groups.

These examples belie the tidiness of the "black" category very quickly. Within each subgroup, there are special cases and circumstances to understand. Every child is a story, and it falls to educators to uncover each one.

Teachers may need a range of professional learning to connect with any child or any background or situation that is unfamiliar to them. (See the left column in the table on p. 50.) Learners may need to challenge their personal views on race, culture, and class, or they may need to gather information about families or develop different communication skills. Professional learning may push educators to examine and rethink their assumptions and expectations about different groups. Educators can learn through seminars, visits to families in the home, conversations with colleagues who share the backgrounds of students, or consultation with external experts.

Sometimes, underserved students present unique instructional challenges and gifts. For example, consider these students.

- Anna, a Cape Verdean newcomer, is three years beyond her peers in terms of her science skills and knowledge. And she arrives completely new to the English language.
- Ewa, a Polish-American, is having difficulty communicating orally. Literacy diagnostics don't indicate a language

LESSONS FROM RUSSELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

At the William E. Russell Elementary School, a small, high-poverty school in Boston, the principal takes the time to learn about every student, paying special attention to underachievers. The classroom teacher and the principal together identify the personal profiles and learning needs of each student and, subsequently, the teacher's professional learning needs.

The leadership team, including coaches, uses a range of data and develops a schoolwide professional learning plan based on schoolwide achievement goals, needs of specific grades and content areas, teacher learning preferences and areas of strength, and available resources. Within that framework, teams shape professional learning plans more specifically, and individual teachers refine them to another level. The teams and teachers most ready to pursue social justice shape their own learning plans, while the rest receive more encouragement, data, and structured advice for improving practice. A team tracks student progress using classroom and benchmark assessments. When professional development is not achieving its purpose, educators seek other strategies for improvement.

Students may receive extra help that extends the day or during lunch. A specialist might come into the classroom and work directly with the student for a period of time. A coach may pay special attention to that student when visiting the classroom, or the school may identify more substantial interventions. Assessments and samples of student work inform the next steps.

After five years of increasing focus and attention, the school evolved from a place where a few people tended to social justice as individuals to become a critical mass of educators who pursued it as a collective endeavor. The school emerged from low-performing status for two consecutive years.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS AND THEIR NEEDS

Understand and engage children	Provide appropriate instruction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand general issues of race, class, culture, privilege — cultural competency. • Explore personal bias, how it impedes student learning, school and district practices, and what to do about it. • Identify norms, family patterns, and traditional expectations of schools as they relate to the cultures of students represented in the classroom. • Develop communication and engagement skills as they relate to cultural competency. • Design anti-racist, anti-bias curriculum. • Use instructional materials that acknowledge and incorporate the backgrounds of students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the appropriate formative assessments and diagnostics. • Interpret formative assessments and diagnostics accurately. • Adapt the instructional curriculum to attend to advanced skills and lags in achievement. • Differentiate and personalize instruction. • Continually measure progress and make adjustments. • Design school schedules that support individual student strengths and needs. • Develop leadership practices that support high expectations and increasing achievement.

problem, and she’s a great painter. When her teacher probes, she learns that Ewa’s only parent is deaf and communicates through sign language; therefore, Ewa does not communicate orally at home.

- Alejandro, a second-generation Mexican-American, speaks Spanish at home and loves soccer. His teacher is challenged to identify how much of Alejandro’s difficulty in math stems from language acquisition versus a learning disability.

Naming specific learning needs and gifts of children from underserved populations compels educators to develop specialized professional knowledge and skills. The right column in the table above lists professional learning needs to implement effective teaching, learning, and assessment for any student. These topics are part of the basics of professional learning. In schools that focus on social justice, the knowledge, skills and dispositions from the left column inform the work of learning and instruction in the right column.

We have evidence of many schools — read about William E. Russell Elementary School in Boston on p. 49 — that have successfully reached out to traditionally underserved students in their own ways and that support adult learning to advance student success (Kannapel, Clements, Taylor, & Hibpshman 2005; Reeves, 2004). There is an emphasis on personalizing and differentiating instruction, as well as developing refined assessments that help educators pinpoint what students know and where they need help. We have examples of high-quality professional learning and momentum to make the basics the law of the land (NSDC, n.d.). And even in these financially strapped times, we have a federal climate and dollars that can advance student and adult learning. All this can help. But progress still depends on each school and local community to name social justice as their cause and identify the specific ways they are willing to dedicate themselves to it.

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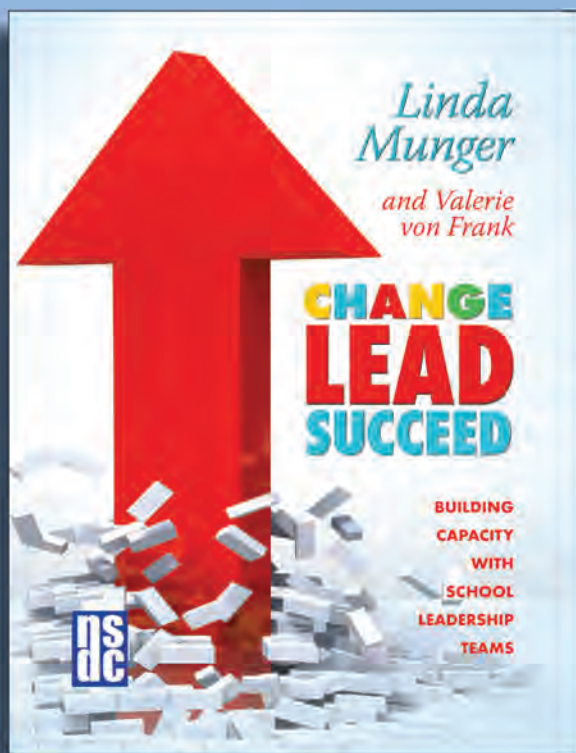
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WHAT TEACHERS WANT

EDUCATORS AT ALL CAREER STAGES
EXPRESS THE DESIRE TO CONNECT WITH
AND LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER



SURVEY OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

Activity	Apprentice means	Professional means	Expert means	Distinguished means
Conducting classroom research.	2.40	2.38	2.56	2.56
Influencing school or district policy.	2.26	2.32	2.49	2.54
#1 Having opportunities to connect with other teachers.	3.59	3.61	3.67	3.57
Attending a workshop on documenting student progress.	2.76	2.67	2.83	2.53
#3 Receiving support for reflection about the results of the work I do in my classroom.	3.25	3.11	3.15	3.11
Being offered opportunities for leadership.	2.69	2.68	3.04	3.01
Attending a workshop on communicating with parents and conducting parent conferences.	2.81	2.50	2.59	2.38
Teaching undergraduate and graduate courses.	1.77	1.82	2.02	2.18

Teachers rated 16 professional development activities on a Likert scale: 1 = The activity is of no benefit to a teacher, 2 = little benefit, 3 = some benefit, and 4 = great benefit. The numbers in each column represent the mean perceived value that teachers indicated for each of the activities.



By Cynthia M. Compton

We are now well into the 21st century and as a nation are clamoring for change and opportunity. What does this mean for public school educators? As a group, are we moving rapidly into the future, or are our systems

rooted in the past? Most importantly, what development opportunities do experienced and novice educators alike perceive as necessary to move our systems into a new era?

If we really believe that our schools are vehicles that prepare students to live in a democracy, then our schools should reflect the democratic principles they espouse. While there is a growing body of literature promoting a new paradigm of differentiated professional development in which teachers' voices shape learning opportunities, the reality is that much professional de-

Activity	Apprentice means	Professional means	Expert means	Distinguished means
Learning to link standards for learning with assessment.	3.03	3.01	3.15	2.96
Crafting new methods of instruction.	3.51	3.37	3.48	3.41
Delivering formal or informal training sessions for colleagues.	2.09	2.29	2.78	2.59
Having assistance with locating and selecting materials and supplies.	3.09	2.95	3.15	3.05
Sharing expertise through writing for publications or conference presentations.	1.90	1.89	2.28	2.31
Attending a workshop on working with gifted and special needs students.	2.82	2.74	2.77	2.65
Learning about current research and best practices.	2.94	2.88	3.08	3.05
Serving in a formal leadership role within the school or district.	1.97	2.17	2.76	2.51

#2

TEACHER PHASES

Apprentice: Apprentice teachers are beginning to plan and deliver instruction on their own. Classroom responsibilities consume all their time and energy.	Professional: Professional teachers shift from focusing on personal needs to student needs and build relationships with peers.	Expert: Expert teachers reflect on their teaching and maintain contact with other expert teachers in the district.	Distinguished: Distinguished teachers demonstrate leadership skills and passion for their practice.
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Source: Steffy et al., 2000.

velopment continues in an outdated, top-down mode. Teacher input is rarely solicited to determine the perceptions of teachers regarding their professional development needs. The result of this outdated approach is that many teachers experience professional development that does not consider them as learners (Darling-Hammond & Ball, 1997) but as passive recipients of knowledge transmitted by someone who tells them what to do and how to do it.

To explore the untapped potential of teacher voice in choice of professional development, I created a survey based on the work on the Steffy model of teacher career growth (Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch, & Enz, 2000). Steffy's model outlines the characteristics of teachers through six career phases from novice to emeritus.

In my study, teachers in a large, suburban school district responded to a survey choosing from an array of professional development options. In addition, teachers answered questions that would place them into one of several career phases: apprentice, professional, expert, or distinguished.

I recognized the need to assess teachers' level of development, expertise, and commitment as part of understanding their learning needs. Experience, degree of structure, sequence, and pace are elements of learning that can be varied to address these three characteristics.

Of the 16 suggested activities (see chart on pp. 52-53), most notable was the one selected by teachers from all levels and all phases — having opportunities to connect with other teachers. This striking level of selection indicates that this activity is an important one to explore across career phases and, through incorporation with other professional development activities, would be a starting point for optimum impact. Indeed, this is formative assessment at its best among professionals. At every level — elementary, middle, and secondary — teachers want to discuss their practice activities and ideas with others.

EMBEDDING TIME TO COLLABORATE

NSDC outlines three essential areas — context, process, and content — that must be considered in professional development in an era of standards-based reform. When opportunities for teachers to connect with others are incorporated into the teacher's day, these elements are present. In discussing our practice with others, we enjoy a much-desired chance to share with others, as well as validation of our role as a contributing professional. This act of sharing creates a connection and opens a dialogue for col-

leagues to learn from one another. Ultimately, these types of discussions are a critical element in forming learning communities, proven successful in school improvement. In addition, such collaborative learning gives teachers in the expert and distinguished phases of their careers the opportunity to share their expertise with others in the professional or apprentice phases. This allows each participant to give and take what best meets his or her needs while at the same time forming a living learning community.

For example, some high school and middle school principals work together to schedule meetings among their respective teachers within the same department. English and language arts teachers discuss curriculum vertical teaming to provide more continuity for their students. This discussion of common issues provides untold benefits as teachers begin seeing the whole picture rather than one year of a student's language arts education. Providing time for teachers to reflect on their practice allows teachers from different phases — apprentice, professional, expert, and distinguished — to network. The apprentice and professional glean what they need from the meeting, having the opportunity to ask questions or share information. Expert and distinguished teachers can share their expertise with others in a nonthreatening environment. It's a winning combination for teachers and students.

OTHER POPULAR LEARNING OPTIONS

The second highest activity in which all career phase teachers expressed interest was for constructing new methods of instruction. Traditionally, educators tend to think this is suited only to teachers in the distinguished career phase. If supported, this kind of professional development could provide new energy for schools, opening opportunities for ideas both freshly learned in college as well as those grounded in years of practice.

The third popular activity in the survey was receiving support for reflection, a notion that is hardly surprising with the frenetic pace of K-12 schools today. Many leading educators stress the importance of reflection in professional learning, but this poses some tremendous challenges, as time and money are in short supply in most schools. Some schools find the time by hiring lunchroom attendants so that teachers can have that period to meet. Others hire an aide to monitor study halls, releasing teachers to meet with each other and spend time reflecting on their practice. Some schools have journal clubs or book groups read current literature on a topic of educational interest. Allowing the group to choose the book gives teachers leeway in meeting their specific needs.

PHASE-SPECIFIC CHOICES

While these opportunities received universal support, others were more phase-specific, as identified by my research. Not surprisingly, apprentice phase teachers showed a marked preference for professional development in the area of learning to

This act of sharing creates a connection and opens a dialogue for colleagues to learn from one another. Ultimately, these types of discussions are a critical element in forming learning communities, proven successful in school improvement.

communicate with parents. This area of responsibility can be daunting to a new teacher, who may be only a few years older than the students he or she teaches. In an era where developing and retaining successful educators is paramount, this activity has been associated with successful induction programs (Steffy et al., 2000).

Apprentice phase teachers also showed an interest in having assistance with locating and selecting materials. However, an unanticipated finding was that expert phase teachers also showed interest in this opportunity. This could be an outgrowth of the expert phase teachers' quest for continuous growth. In contrast, it could also signal a desire to transfer this task to others and actually be a reflection of dissatisfaction with time constraints inherent in a teacher's job. Impromptu notes in the survey margins addressed the issue of work-life balance and indicated a reluctance to consider professional development because of time frustrations.

IS THERE A FULLY DEVELOPED GROUP?

The professional phase teachers were noticeably absent in terms of requesting specific professional development. In fact, they often wrote in the margins of the surveys their desire not to attend workshops on documenting student progress or working with gifted and special needs students. Teachers in this phase rated both of these variables as having less potential benefit than did teachers in any of the other phases. This lower rating by the professional phase teachers compared to the ratings given by expert and distinguished phase teachers seems surprising. However, when considered in relation to the continuous reflection and growth seeking of the expert and distinguished teachers, it makes sense that they would perceive more benefit from developmental activities than those teachers who are in the professional phase.

Disturbingly, the disparity between professional and expert phase teachers for these variables may indicate the beginnings of persistent or deep withdrawal in the professional phase teachers. If so, these areas could be of key importance in identifying absence of a perceived need for learning about current research and best practices. Clearly, professional development for teachers in this phase presents a major challenge to school administrators given that the phase with the largest number shows the least interest in professional development activities.

SUPPORTING THOSE WITH EXPERIENCE

Teachers in the expert phase could be a valuable resource to assist with apprentice teacher growth and represent a group rich with possible ideas and opportunities for administrators and staff developers. In addition, expert and distinguished teachers are most interested in influencing school or district policy.

These factors are not surprising given that teachers in this phase are more comfortable with their teaching responsibilities and have enough experience to voice thoughtful opinions re-

Providing time for teachers to reflect on their practice allows teachers from different phases — apprentice, professional, expert, and distinguished — to network. The apprentice and professional glean what they need from the meeting, having the opportunity to ask questions or share information. Expert and distinguished teachers can share their expertise with others in a nonthreatening environment. It's a winning combination for teachers and students.

garding policy. In addition, they perceive a greater benefit from this activity than their colleagues do in the apprentice and professional phases. Further, expert and distinguished teachers perceived a greater interest in leadership and in delivering formal or informal training sessions for colleagues than apprentice or professional phase teachers. Writing for publications and presentations is an area for which teachers in the expert and distinguished phases expressed interest as well. Teachers in the expert phases saw a greater potential benefit in learning about current research and best practices.

Overall, the study supported the idea that interactive professional development has a role in educator learning and in establishing learning communities. As anticipated, educators at different phases in their careers hold distinctly different perceptions of their development needs. The study confirms that apprentice teachers perceive a need for development activities addressing their immediate needs in relation to their students. We also see that expert and distinguished phase teachers represent an area of great potential, based on their perceived needs and willingness to become involved in educational and administrative realms. The area of more challenge than others is supporting the professional teacher. Clearly, we need additional research to determine methods to engage this well-educated and professionally mature group, and to best take advantage of their expertise for coming generations of teachers.

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A BETTER WAY *to* MEASURE

NEW SURVEY TOOL GIVES EDUCATORS A CLEAR PICTURE OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING'S IMPACT

By Rolf K. Blank

Just when educators are learning more about what constitutes effective professional development, a collaborative team of education researchers and practitioners have developed, tested, and implemented a cost-effective method of measuring and reporting on the quality of teacher professional development.

The teacher professional development analysis tool was developed as part of the Surveys of Enacted Curriculum (SEC) online reporting system, with support from the National Science Foundation. The analysis tool is now being disseminated and offered for use by education leaders, professional development specialists, and evaluators.

This new tool for reporting and analyzing teacher professional development was designed with findings from leading research studies since the mid-1990s, which have reshaped the way educators and researchers define effective teacher development.



NEW APPROACH TO MEASURING TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

The SEC survey-based analysis method is teacher-based, not program-based. The use of a web-based tool directly with teachers allows educators and evaluators to gain a comprehensive picture of the professional development received by teachers over a given period of time (e.g. one year or one semester), and then to relate quality measures to intended outcomes (e.g. improving practice or raising student achievement). The methodology that has been developed and implemented under the SEC system addresses three key issues in evaluating teacher development:

1. Problem of measuring single program effects:

Evaluations are often designed to try to measure the effects of a single professional development initiative. Educators know that in reality, most teachers participate in multiple learning programs, training courses, evening classes, workshops, or teacher networking over the course of a school year. It is very difficult to isolate effects of a single program.

2. Best uses of survey method: Surveys have been used in many different ways with teachers such as assessing workshop implementation, identifying teacher perceptions or attitudes, or determining needs for improvement. Research on effective surveys shows that responses are more accurate and valid when respondents report on behavior or practices rather than perceptions or attitudes (Desimone, 2009).

3. Integrate teacher development with curriculum: Designs and programs for teacher professional development are often not coherent with the school curriculum and teacher assignments, and the learning is not integrated into overall school strategies for improvement. As a result, an evaluation will provide little information on how well the teacher development contributed to improvement of teaching.

Since 1998, the Council of Chief State School Officers has partnered with researchers and a collaborative of states to develop, test, and implement a system of survey tools that have the primary function of reporting comparable data on key indicators of classroom instruction, both content and practices. The design and structure of the survey tool ensures data collection and reporting at a moderate level of depth about the methods and content of instruction as well as the characteristics and depth of teacher preparation and continuing development in the teacher's assigned subject area.

Educators can analyze data from the system to determine the degree of relationship between a teacher's level of education and development in his or her field and the instruction he or she leads in the classroom. Since consistent data can be collected from sets of teachers in a given subject or grade level, we can analyze professional development effects for groups of teachers that have had similar preparation and experience. Therefore, the survey data can be categorized so that across a sizable group of teachers, the relationship of professional development to subsequent instruction can be clarified and distinguished from other possible confounding factors.

DEVELOPMENT OF QUESTIONS AND REPORTING SCALES

From 2002 to 2006, a team of researchers and educators developed and tested a new set of survey measures of the quality and amount of teacher professional development (Smithson & Blank, 2007). The set of items for the survey tool were written specifically to measure characteristics of teacher professional development that have been demonstrated in numerous scientific research studies to produce positive outcomes for improving teaching and

learning. (Key studies include: Birman & Porter, 2002; Corcoran & Foley, 2003; Cohen & Hill, 2001; Loucks-Horsley, Hewson, Love, & Stiles, 1998; Kennedy, 1999; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002.) The research findings clustered around five main characteristics of teacher professional development designs that produce effective results:

- Content focus;
- Active methods of learning by teachers;
- Coherence with curriculum;
- Collective participation; and
- Sufficient time — frequency, duration, follow-up.

For the Surveys of Enacted Curriculum professional development component, the team wrote sets of items that adequately measure these key constructs. A key objective was including sufficient numbers of items to produce a reliable, valid reporting scale. Following are examples of the items that are included in several of the scales of quality professional development that were produced and are now can be used through the SEC system:

Professional development time/frequency by type of activity:

- Coursework, workshop, institute, and/or inservice.
- Coaching, mentoring, network, curriculum writing, assessment development.
- Number of hours per activity, frequency and duration (including clear definition of teacher professional development).

Coherence:

- Supports school improvement plan.
- Is consistent with subject/grade curriculum.
- Follows from prior teacher development session.

Collective participation:

- All teachers from school involved in professional development activities.
- Learning activities include teachers in department groups.

Active engagement of teachers:

- Leads session during professional development.
- Practices learning or receive feedback.
- Develops assessments.
- Receives coaching or mentoring.

Content focus:

- In-depth study of specific concepts.

The teacher professional development analysis tool was developed as part of the Surveys of Enacted Curriculum (SEC) online reporting system.

- Alignment of curriculum to standards.
- Study how children learn concepts.
- Specific instructional approaches to content.

HOW SURVEY DATA ARE REPORTED

The Surveys of Enacted Curriculum professional development data are collected from individual teachers using the online system (see <http://seconline.wceruw.org/secWebHome.htm>). A district or school leader, researcher, or evaluator can request and contract to use the online system for a nominal fee. Each user

group leader defines survey components to match the group's objectives and the teachers to be surveyed. The system provides orientation materials and presentations for use by leaders, and they can be presented in person or through online video streaming.

The data results are reported online to users. Formatted data displays provide user-friendly analysis and interpretation of data. Since a range of background characteristics are part of the survey data collected, educators analyze results with several options for cross-tabulations, e.g. teacher experience, school size, or student achievement.

ence, school size, or student achievement.

The chart on p. 59 shows an example of how the professional development surveys data are reported, in this case showing teacher responses concerning learning they experienced over a one-year period (Blank, 2004). Several of the items are used to analyze the extent of "active engagement of teachers" during their professional development. The method of displaying response data for groups of teachers allows for comparisons between different teacher categories, or the same teacher data can be compared at two points in time (e.g. those in year one vs. those in year two).

WHAT WE LEARNED

The SEC approach to professional development was used in a multidistrict, multistate longitudinal study of the effects of a specific targeted approach to teacher development completed in 2007. The teacher surveys developed by the CCSSO team were implemented with 500 middle grades teachers across four large school districts that were part of the National Science Foundation Math and Science Partnership (MSP). Half the teachers who were surveyed in year one of the project were enrolled in the local Math and Science Partnership design for professional development (treatment group) and the other half were teaching in similar schools and assignment in the same district (comparison group). At the end of two years, after professional development activities were completed, the surveys were administered again to the same teachers. One objective was to

measure differences in the amount and quality of professional development between the two groups of teachers. A second objective was to measure the degree of change in instructional practices and content of instruction that can be attributed to effects of the teacher professional development.

Following are several key findings from the study, and the differences reported below were all statistically significant. These findings illustrate the kinds of analyses that are possible using the teacher SEC method of evaluation over time.

More time in professional development.

Teachers in MSP-supported professional development (the treatment group) reported significantly more time spent in professional development, as compared to comparison teachers. Critical to this measurement and analysis was the use of reliable, comparable metrics for defining and tracking methods of professional development across different locations, subjects, and activities. The definition and item development through the SEC surveys greatly improves accuracy of measurement of amount of teacher development over a specific period of time.

Greater focus on subject content.

In the four-site study, mathematics teachers participating in the treatment group for professional development reported significantly greater math content in their professional development than teachers in the comparison group, and the professional development in the target group had significantly greater focus on standards and instruction.

Quality of preparation for challenging content and diverse students.

In our longitudinal study, teachers in the target group indicated that at the end of the professional development period they were better prepared to teach challenging math content as compared to teachers in the comparison group; and the target group teachers programs reported higher agreement that they were prepared to teach a diverse group of students than comparison teachers.

Change in instructional practices.

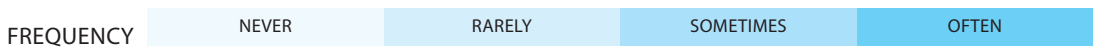
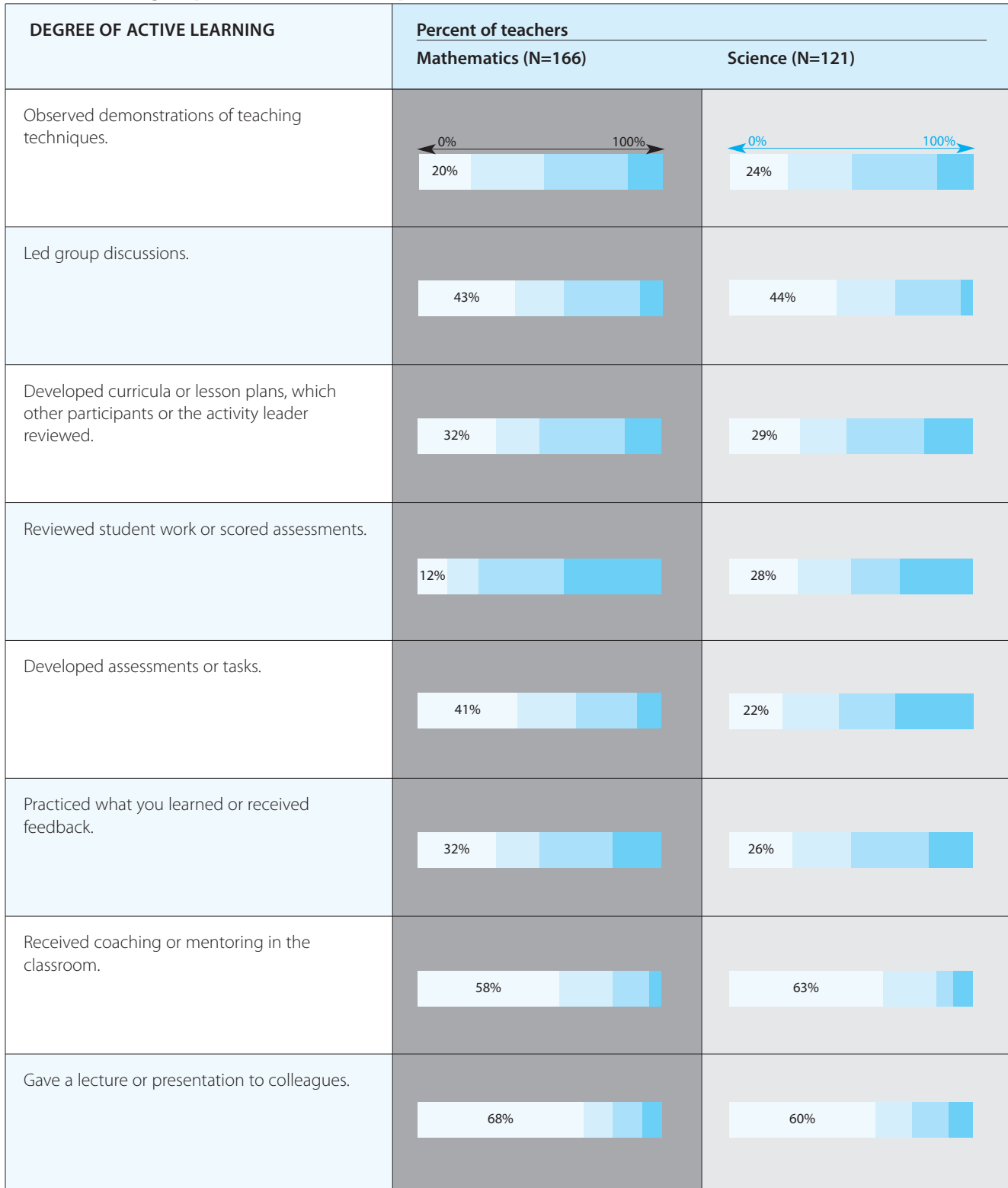
With the link between data on professional development and teachers' instruction in their classrooms, we could determine that the instructional practices of math teachers in the target group changed over time so that teachers increased the time and emphasis on demonstrating understanding of mathematics, analysis of information, and active learning by students, as compared to the practices of comparison teachers.

Alignment of instruction to standards.

When teacher professional development is conducted within an improvement initiative based on state content, one key objective is to align classroom instruction more closely with stan-

The teacher surveys developed by the CCSSO team were implemented with 500 middle grades teachers across four large school districts that were part of the National Science Foundation Math and Science Partnership.

Active learning of professional development activities in middle school mathematics and science



Source: Blank, 2004.

dards for curriculum. In our evaluation study, we analyzed the relationship between quality measures of professional development and instructional content being taught. Two measures of the quality of professional development were found to be positively associated with greater alignment of instruction to standards: coherence with curriculum being taught by teachers and focus on content.

PUTTING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

Education decision makers, staff development leaders, and program evaluators are seeking models for professional development evaluation that are research-based and provide valid, reliable measures that adequately address the development initiative.

Given the wide range of policy and program initiatives aimed at improving teacher knowledge and skills, a critical need in K-12 education is improving evaluation of the quality of teacher development. Too often, evaluation methods only address teacher perceptions or the amount or types of teacher development that were provided.

It is critical that evaluation methods for improvement initiatives be tied

closely to findings from leading research. The SEC-based survey method provides for effective evaluation of evidence from teacher development programs in light of key constructs of quality. This method gives priority to evaluating the sum of knowledge development activities for teachers in relation to school and district improvement objectives. Leaders can assess a range of data regarding impact on target teachers over a period of time and do not have to weigh findings from separate studies of multiple programs in a district or school or try to sort out results from overlapping program initiatives.

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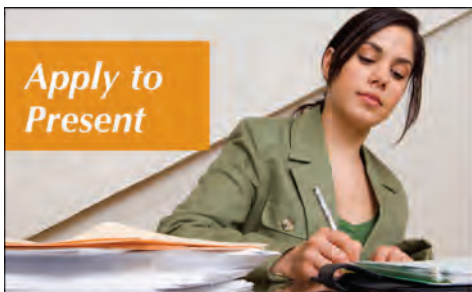
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In our evaluation study, we analyzed the relationship between quality measures of professional development and instructional content being taught.



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Nelson



Guerra

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

Campus visits are a common approach to preparing students for college. In many cases, students and their parents research potential colleges and then visit a select few to help make a final decision about which college to attend. Campus visits are viewed as important enough that students are often excused from high school classes to make the trip. Because not all parents have the time or resources to take their children to visit colleges, many high schools organize

In each issue of *JSD*, Sarah W. Nelson and Patricia L. Guerra write about the importance of and strategies for developing cultural awareness in teachers and schools. Nelson (swnelson@txstate.edu) is an assistant professor in the Department of Education and Community Leadership and associate director of the International Center for Educational Leadership and Social Change at Texas State University-San Marcos, and co-founder of Transforming Schools for a Multicultural Society (TRANSFORMS). Guerra (pg16@txstate.edu) is an assistant professor in the Department of Education and Community Leadership at Texas State University-San Marcos and co-founder of Transforming Schools for a Multicultural Society (TRANSFORMS).

Columns are available at www.nsd.org.

campus visits for groups of students. This is a step forward in ensuring all students have access to information about college. However, more effort is needed.

For most students, the decision to attend college begins long before high school. As early as elementary school, students begin to perceive whether college is an option for them. This perception develops from the implicit and explicit messages students receive from educators and family.

Students who are given affirmation of their college potential begin to take note of information about the college-going process and their options for postsecondary education. They notice what colleges people attend. They listen when school counselors and teachers talk about course selection, and they begin to envision what life will be like when they get to college. This is not the case for students who see college as out of reach. Such students may disregard even explicit discussions about college because they do not believe college could be an option. Providing support for campus visits in middle school is one strategy to help culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students see themselves as college-bound. These visits must be purposefully planned.

HELPING STUDENTS FEEL THEY BELONG

In spite of efforts to increase diversity in higher education, most four-

year colleges remain largely white. This is true for the student population and the faculty. When culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students visit college campuses and see few people who look like them, the idea that they do not belong is reinforced. Educators must make special preparations for their visits.

Most colleges and universities have a standard procedure for arranging campus visits for groups of students. Such visits usually include a presentation by someone in the admissions office and a guided tour. Typically, little thought is given to choosing the presenter or tour guide, other than to ensure that he or she is knowledgeable. When culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students are visiting, however, more planning is necessary to ensure that the students feel welcome and understood.

PLANNING CAMPUS VISITS FOR STUDENT GROUPS

For educators planning campus visits, there are a number of issues to consider.

First, be purposeful in selecting the



university to visit. Selection begins with a review of campus demographics. Research the diversity of the student population and university faculty. Compare these figures to your school's demographics. Are the student bodies similar? If not, are there particular degree programs that have a more diverse student body? Are there particular degree programs that have a more diverse faculty population? This kind of information is often available on university web pages, but you may have to dig a bit to find it. If necessary, call the admissions department and ask about student and faculty demographics.

Another aspect of the selection process is researching the diversity among student organizations. Does the campus have a wide variety of student organizations? Does the campus have organizations that focus on

Ask if the department is willing to tailor the visit to your students' needs.

the interests of students who are often marginalized? Examples include groups for African-American, Asian-American, LGBT, and Latino students. Sometimes groups are general interest, such as the Black Student Organization. Other times organizations are particular to a degree program, such as the LGBT Business Association. In almost all cases, student organizations that focus on a particular student group have the name of the group in the title.

If you learn from your research that there is virtually no diversity on the campus or that finding information about the diversity of the campus is nearly impossible, you may want to re-think taking students there. There are plenty of colleges and universities that are working to increase diversity. There is no need to take students to one that does not even have the issue on its radar screen. In fact, it may be harmful to do so.

SETTING UP THE VISIT

After identifying a university to visit, contact the admissions department. Find out its process for arranging campus visits for school groups. Ask if the department is willing to tailor the visit to your students' needs. Tell the admissions representative about your students, and explain that you want your students to see and hear from people who look like them and understand what it's like to be one of a few diverse students on a campus that is largely mainstream, if that is the university's demographic profile. Some admissions representatives will immediately understand your request. Others may find your request odd. You may have to explain why it is important for students to see and interact with diverse students and faculty. Be prepared to use your research about the campus to give the admissions representative ideas about particular faculty or programs that have the diversity you are looking for. Ask if you may contact the program head or faculty directly to plan the visit. If the admissions officer indicates that the visit will be set up through the admissions office, be sure to get the name and contact information of the person who will make the arrangements.

When talking with the person making the arrangements, explain that you want students not only to see the campus and all it has to offer, but also to hear from people who can help your students identify with the university. Ask whether students from the diverse student groups you identified can provide a campus tour or talk with the students about campus life. Ask whether faculty with diverse backgrounds can talk with your students about academic programs and whether someone from the admissions office who is familiar with issues first-generation college students face can speak with the students. Ask whether a financial aid officer sharing the students' background and language can meet with parents to

discuss funding options for college.

Once arrangements have been made, prepare for the visit by personally inviting students and their families to attend. It is important to include families in the visit because going to college is a decision that affects the entire family. The earlier the family is involved, the more likely the student is to develop a college-going mind-set. A personal invitation gives you a chance to address any concerns the student or family may have, such as college being out of reach financially or being uncertain about campus safety. Making general announcements through letters, flyers, and/or e-mails is generally not an effective strategy for recruiting students because students who do not already see themselves as college-going tend to think such messages are for other students.

WHEN YOU'RE THERE

During the visit, be mindful of what students are seeing and hearing. Ask people the students interact with to talk about their campus experiences and to advise the students and families. While most who interact with students will be affirming, it's possible some will not be. Be prepared to counter any negative or deficit messages with evidence that your students belong at the university. Some of this can be done during the visit, but a deeper discussion is possible in a debriefing session after the visit.

Debriefing with the students and families is important regardless of how the visit goes because it gives you a chance to answer questions and to evaluate whether the visit was successful in helping students develop a college-going mind-set. School staff should use this information to improve future visits. But more importantly, they should use it as insight into how to reinforce a college-bound mind-set in students as they continue on to high school and how to assist their families in developing step-by-step plans to realize the goal of college. ■



Conversation protocols help district discuss all sides of complicated issues

No plan survives its collision with reality. At the same time, reality has an irritating habit of shifting, seriously complicating our fantasies about how things were going to go. Weak leaders want agreement. Fierce leaders want the truth and understand that none of us owns the truth about anything. In order to get it right for all of us, rather than to be right, leaders interrogate multiple, competing realities that exist simultaneously on just about any topic. Everyone owns a piece of the truth, and each piece is valid. In this article, Michael Torres describes how his district uses specific conversation models to develop shared understanding around civil behavior and roles and responsibilities in the Corpus Christi (Texas) Independent School District. — Susan Scott

By Michael W. Torres

The mission of the Corpus Christi Independent School District is to develop the hearts and minds of all students. It does our community little

In each issue of *JSD*, Susan Scott (susan@fierceinc.com) explores aspects of communication that encourage meaningful collaboration. Scott, author of *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success At Work & In Life, One Conversation at a Time* (Penguin, 2002) and *Fierce Leadership: A Bold Alternative to the Worst “Best” Practices of Business Today* (Broadway Business, 2009), leads Fierce Inc. (www.fierceinc.com), which helps companies around the world transform the conversations that are central to their success. Fierce in the Schools carries this work into schools and higher education.

Columns are available at www.nsd.org.
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good to try to educate our students on academics without developing the heart to connect students to each other and to the community as a whole. We have found that using objectives and strategies we learned in studying Fierce Conversations has brought us good results. I'll share a couple of specific examples from our experience.

INTERROGATING REALITY

Time is a critical asset in schools. Our precious time is often squandered in meetings without focus or purpose or around issues that have already been decided. Yet there is a tremendous need to get at the fundamental truth related to student success. We often find it difficult to address the truth. Principals avoid parents who are angry, teachers avoid children who are unruly, and students give tacit approval by their silence when other students are bullies. We hesitate to have conversations that change people because we don't want to offend or confront. Sometimes we don't know how to skillfully deliver messages

without leaving a wake — that is, creating unintended consequences that exacerbate the problem.

Recently, our superintendent led a civil behavior summit that brought together law enforcement, clergy, prominent community members, principals, teachers, and students. Our goal was to review current data, then share perspectives and gather input from all participants about the major issues affecting our ability to increase civil behavior in our schools.

While it is true that more of our students are learning at increasingly rigorous levels, it is also true that we are not as civil as we could be. Students get angry at each other, at teachers, at parents, and at administrators — the cycle goes around and around. Leading a diverse group of individuals to name specific problems and consider possible solutions was a monumental task. Because several of us in the district are familiar with the work outlined in *Fierce Conversations*, we turned to the beach ball conversation protocol to focus our attention on our key topic.

We started by teaching leaders at each discussion table how to use the protocol. Our conversations resulted in several relevant ideas to develop



Michael W. Torres

coherent action plans to increase civility throughout the district for the upcoming school year.

The beach ball protocol gave us the tools we needed to address the real issues and kept us focused. In a beach ball conversation, everyone recognizes that they hold a particular perspective — that is, they stand on only one of the colored stripes on the beach ball. From that position, no one person can see the entire ball, or completely understand an issue. In beach ball conversations, we also name our specific issues to address ahead of time and are specific about our desired outcome.

We found that we saved time by focusing on real issues and identifying strategies for moving forward. Rather than digging 100 wells one foot deep, we were able to dig one 100-foot well, probing much deeper about how to have a greater impact on student, parent, and educator behavior. Over the years, we have found that when we are confronting discipline issues, we have a tendency to dwell on consequences, which rarely provokes learning in students or parents. In our most recent conversations, we chose instead to focus on a few high-leverage positive improvements for student behavior. We discussed how to develop strategies for teaching our students these positive behaviors. This perspective has enabled our district to focus energy on solutions rather than problems.

The beach ball conversations allow leaders to facilitate meetings around tough issues in a safe environment. Those who offer differing opinions won't suffer adverse consequences. The protocols offer guides that keep us moving safely to a collegial resolution with maximum participation.

KNOWING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Educators face a number of challenges, and one of them is constant change. In education, like many professions, many professionals change



Ask what they see from their stripe on the beach ball

Nothing is more dangerous than an idea if it's the only one you have. Gather together those central to the success of your school and of your students and ask them to tell you what reality looks like from where they live and operate every day. Ask questions. Let the phrase "Say more about that" become your mantra. If you get it right, together you'll interrogate reality, provoke learning, resolve tough challenges, and enrich relationships — the four objectives of every fierce conversation.

If you'd like to, let me know how it goes at susan@fierceinc.com.

— Susan Scott

positions throughout their careers. For example, the principal of an elementary school becomes principal of a middle school, and then later moves into a district role. As people change positions, their roles and responsibilities change. One way that our district knowledge of conversation protocols has helped our educators bridge such change is through clear communication about roles and expectations. In such situations, we have successfully used the decision tree model to clarify who is responsible for what decisions and actions and to show the pathway to greater professional growth.

In the decision tree, there are decisions at different levels — the leaf level, the branch level, the trunk level, and the root level. Decisions further from the leaf level require input from

more people and more shared decision making. At the same time, decisions at the leaf level are the sole responsibility of one individual. With clarity about who is responsible for what, everyone involved can move forward with purpose.

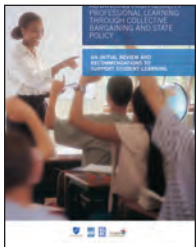
One of our district educators was hired as a new assistant principal soon after participating in a Fierce Conversations workshop. He moved from being a parent coordinator at a high school to become assistant principal at a middle school. He later shared with his colleagues that conversation protocols gave him and his supervisor the tools they needed to clarify his responsibilities in his new position. He used the delegation conversation model to ask what was expected of him in his role. Rather than making assumptions, he would clarify the level of delegation: Was his task at a leaf, a branch, a trunk, or root level? Was it his responsibility to make a final decision, or was he expected to consult a higher authority as he worked through resolution of the issue? He found he was making fewer assumptions and communicating clearly to understand his responsibilities.

The foundational objective in holding meaningful conversations is to enrich the relationship. Every teacher has the opportunity to have countless conversations with students and peers. Each conversation has the opportunity to build respect for individuals, build understanding of cultures, and create new understanding. Each conversation builds knowledge at first slowly, then suddenly, as a new way to understand a new or differing world, concept or point of view.

•
Michael W. Torres (mwtorres@ccisd.us) is a school leadership director at Corpus Christi Independent School District in Corpus Christi, Texas. ■

THE ROLE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

[www.nsd.org/news/ advancinghighqualityprofessionallearning.pdf](http://www.nsd.org/news/advancinghighqualityprofessionallearning.pdf)



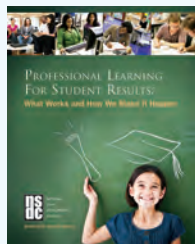
Through collective bargaining agreements and state policies, local school districts and states establish the conditions, resources, and processes for professional learning that strengthen teaching and student learning. NSDC, the American Federation of Teachers, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and the National Education Association joined together to examine how high-quality professional learning can be provided to all educators in all school settings. Each partner joined this national initiative to share collective bargaining agreements and

state policies that support high-quality professional learning for every teacher. Read *Advancing High-Quality Professional Learning Through Collective Bargaining and State Policy* to explore specific policies and recommendations for future actions.

READ OUR LATEST ANNUAL REPORT

[www.nsd.org/standfor/ NSDC2010AnnualReport.pdf](http://www.nsd.org/standfor/NSDC2010AnnualReport.pdf)

Covering NSDC's recent accomplishments in advancing the field, this 2009-10 annual report showcases policy, partnerships, products and services, foundation work, financial information, and member perspectives. Use portions of the report for advocacy purposes or to introduce new members to NSDC.



WATCH LEARNING IN ACTION

www.nsd.org/standfor/definition.cfm

"Stults Road Elementary School: Professional Learning in Action" is a new video available on the NSDC web site. The video brings to life NSDC's definition of professional learning. Experience a math vertical cadre meeting where members engage in a real-life cycle of continuous improvement.

WHAT DOES JOB-EMBEDDED MEAN?

www.nsd.org/news/jobembeddedPDbrief.cfm

Most educators agree that job-embedded professional learning is a core component of any reform effort. What they don't agree on is exactly what "job-embedded professional development" means. NSDC has partnered with the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality and the Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center to produce *Job-Embedded Professional Development: What It Is, Who Is Responsible, and How to Get It Done Well*. The brief aims to build consensus about what constitutes job-embedded professional learning and offers recommendations for implementation.

CHANGE WE BELIEVE IN

[www.nsd.org /learningblog/](http://www.nsd.org/learningblog/)

Hayes Mizell asks:

What is professional development change we can believe in? Some things are fundamental. It would be quite a change, for example, if states, school systems, and schools took seriously NSDC's Standards for Staff Development and Standards Assessment Inventory and routinely used these tools as a framework for conceiving, planning, and organizing every professional development experience. Though at least half of the state education agencies and many school systems have adopted the standards, there is little evidence that they have honored and effectively used them to drive daily practice. But there is an even simpler standard to guide professional development: Will the professional development increase the productivity of the educators who engage in it, and how will we know?



Hayes Mizell

Read the rest of Mizell's posting and share your opinions.

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.

call for articles

Theme: Teacher leadership

Manuscript deadline: Oct. 15, 2010

Issue: June 2011

Theme: Standards for professional learning

Manuscript deadline: Dec. 15, 2010

Issue: August 2011

- Please send manuscripts and questions to Rebecca Bender (rebecca.bender@nsdc.org).
- Notes to assist authors in preparing a manuscript are at www.nsd.org/news/jsd/guidelines.cfm.
- Themes for additional upcoming issues are available at www.nsd.org/news/jsd/themes.cfm.

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

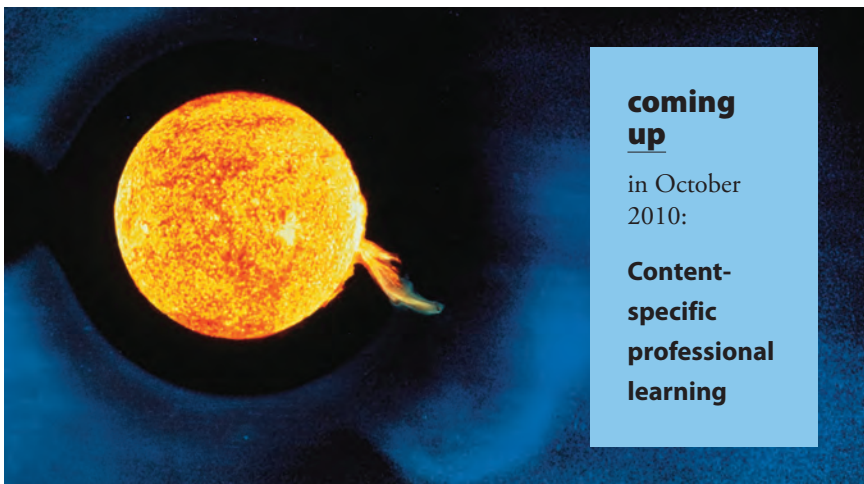
A small-scale research project investigated what types of professional learning teachers at different career phases prefer. Like many surveys of teachers, this project underscores the value of collaboration as a key aspect of a job-embedded professional learning agenda.

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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MetLife Foundation supports standards revision

NSDC has received a \$250,000 grant from MetLife Foundation to initiate the revision of NSDC's Standards for Staff Development. First published in 1995 and revised in 2001, NSDC's standards represent the collaborative work of NSDC and 17 other professional associations. Based on research, the standards define effective professional development and guide schools and districts in implementing professional learning to improve student achievement. MetLife Foundation's support reinforces its commitment to increasing teacher effectiveness and strengthening the role of collaborative leadership in schools.

"It has been almost 10 years since the standards were revised. Standards revision is essential to respond to new research in the field and requests from successful practitioners," said Stephanie Hirsh, NSDC's executive director. "Through the revision process, NSDC will align the standards to the new definition of professional learning. Because NSDC leads



"Standards revision is essential to respond to new research in the field and requests from successful practitioners."

— Stephanie Hirsh,
NSDC executive director

the national conversation in relation to professional development, this effort has tremendous potential for impact on educators and students. Through the standards revision, NSDC once again will assist practitioners and policy makers by developing tools and strategies that translate policy into practice."

NSDC will revise the standards over two years. During the first year, NSDC and partners will focus on developing the revised standards. In the second year, NSDC will revise the supporting materials educators need to implement the standards into practice.

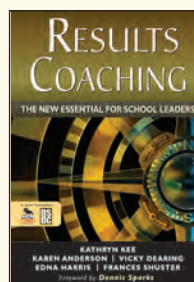
"NSDC made a significant, ground-

breaking contribution to the field of education with the development of its Standards for Staff Development in 1996 and their revision in 2001," said Dennis White, president and CEO of MetLife Foundation. "Many factors combine to compel a careful revision of the standards at this time: growing economic challenges, new research on teacher and leader effectiveness, persistent gaps in student achievement, particularly in disadvantaged schools, and an urgency to better prepare all students for a demanding future. We recognize the significance of the work and are pleased to encourage and support this important initiative."

book club

RESULTS COACHING: THE NEW ESSENTIAL FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

Learn about a leadership model based on building coaching relationships with staff members to help them develop as professionals. Becoming a coach leader is a new identity that challenges leaders to walk the talk, continuously growing and improving themselves before leading and modeling for others. In the next NSDC Book Club selection, authors Kathryn Kee, Karen Anderson, Vicky Dearing, Edna Harris, and Frances Shuster build upon coaching standards and competencies to help leaders energize the potential of everyone they touch.



Use this blueprint to guide educators to create productive school cultures. The book covers language that builds trust and confidence, methods for effective communication, and strategies for conducting open and reflective conversations.

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 \$49. To receive this book, add the NSDC Book Club to your membership before Sept. 15. It will be mailed in October. For more information about this or any membership package, call NSDC at 800-727-7288 or e-mail NSDCoffice@nsdc.org.



How a framework for reaching out to boys helped Boston make social justice progress

In its October 2006 policy brief, *Are Boys Making the Grade? Gender Gaps in Achievement and Attainment*, the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy noted that the gender gap is real and has a negative effect on boys, most notably black and Latino boys. The sharp decline in enrollment among black and Latino males is just one indicator that these groups need particular attention. Additional research clarifies that these groups are typically at the lowest end of the achievement spectrum.

When I served as deputy superintendent for Boston Public Schools, I worked with a cohort of 44 K-12 principals and headmasters to create a model that supports minority males and helps them to reach or surpass proficiency on state assessments, empowering them to access the American dream. Together, we created the 10 Boys Initiative to close achievement gaps.

The 10 Boys Initiative is a proposition for equity, with differentiated support for a select group of boys to help them reach academic and social goals. Each school identifies and develops a cohort of 10 boys who score in the “needs improvement” category and moves them to

Ingrid Carney is president of the National Staff Development Council.

on board INGRID CARNEY

proficiency through a focus on:

- Principal leadership;
- Academic tutoring and support;
- Social/emotional support;
- Leadership opportunities; and
- Parent engagement.

Working within the framework that outlines the critical dimensions above, principals took the lead to bring the program to life. They met regularly with the boys for book talks and life discussions; they set goals and signed learning contracts with each young man; they met with parents; they provided resources for tutoring and academic intervention; they provided field trips, guest speakers and other social activities; and they helped the boys choose fun names for their group. Some of my favorites are: the Ten Kings, the LIVE Brothers (Loyal, Intelligent, Victorious, Everlasting), the A Team, the Gentlemen’s Club, and My Brother’s Keeper.

Participating students experienced significant academic results. After one year of implementation involving a total of 380 boys in grades 3-10 in 38 schools, the results were:

- 110% increase overall in the number of boys scoring proficient or advanced in English and language arts, from 16.7% to 35%;
- 123% increase overall in the

number of boys scoring proficient or advanced in mathematics, from 12.3% to 27.4%; and

- 368% increase in the number of 10th-grade boys scoring proficient or advanced in mathematics, from 11.8% to 55.2%.

In year two, the Ten Boys Initiative expanded to include nearly 1,000 boys.

Principals and teachers provided feedback about the impact of the 10 Boys Initiative. One principal said, “A concentrated effort on a high-risk group produced results. That’s fact! The students, parents, and teachers accepted the challenge with significant results. Much can be learned from this initiative.” One teacher commented, “The Ten Boys Initiative has had an incredibly positive effect that is quite noticeable in the classroom. Alonzo’s sense of self has been elevated and has coincided with improvements in his schoolwork. He has great potential and is now realizing that if he puts his mind to it and believes in himself, he can accomplish much more than he has previously thought.”

I’m proud of the social justice work we accomplished through the 10 Boys Initiative and would be happy to talk about it with you any time. ■



NSDC'S PURPOSE:

Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.



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NSDC CALENDAR

September	SAVE THE DATE: Board election takes place in September NSDC will elect new members of the Board of Trustees in September. Beginning in late August, the slate of candidates will be available online. Members will vote online or by mail-in ballot during September. New trustees will join the board in December at NSDC's 42nd Annual Conference in Atlanta.
Sept. 17	Proposal deadline for NSDC 2011 Summer Conference in Indianapolis, Ind.
Sept. 25	Shirley Hord Learning Team Award submission deadline.
Oct. 15	Last day to save \$50 on registration for NSDC's 42nd Annual Conference, Atlanta, Ga.
Dec. 4-8	NSDC's 42nd Annual Conference, Atlanta, Ga.

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With gratitude to the sponsors of NSDC's 2010 Summer Conference in Seattle. Your generous support is essential to our success.

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NSDC's online learning programs reflect our purpose that every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves. Participants in our e-learning programs actively engage with content, learning with and from facilitators and colleagues during weekly live sessions, collaborative activities, and group discussions.

Programs are offered through the NSDC Learning Exchange, our online e-learning platform that incorporates live meetings and webinars, social networking, community building, and resource sharing.

Each five-week program is \$199 for NSDC members and \$249 for nonmembers.

Each program features:

- Pre-program community-building activities.
- Live, weekly interactive sessions that stress active participation and collaboration.
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- Weekly virtual discussions designed to encourage and support collaboration.
- Weekly activities and reflection assignments that make learning relevant to each participant's working environment.

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Facilitated by author Linda Munger
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Facilitated by
NSDC Executive Director
Stephanie Hirsh
Oct. 25 – Nov. 24, 2010

To register for these programs, and to see the full list of programs for 2010-11,
go to www.nsd.org/elearning/programs/.



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Social justice in schools requires difficult conversations and clear vision

I thought I understood the term “social justice” when we chose it for a *JSD* theme, but I did not fully understand its meaning.

A story from my school board experience illustrates how understanding of this topic evolves. During my school board tenure, state testing assumed new levels of significance. Our state department of education (pre-NCLB) disaggregated student test results by gender, race, free and reduced lunch eligibility, English language learners, and disabilities. The state education agency then announced school rankings determined by a formula that considered test scores across subjects as well as the categories above.

The state was committed to identifying and calling on schools to close achievement gaps. The stakes were high, and, in some cases, just one student failing an exam in one subject could tip the school into the unacceptable category and require the district to take drastic actions to address the results.

During my tenure, we faced this situation twice. Each time we got the news, we discussed how to communicate with the community. While we wanted to say to the majority of parents that their children’s education

had not been compromised, we knew we sounded like we were blaming the children who had failed.

Instead of recognizing we had failed all the children, we looked for a way to manage the fallout. And each time, there was fallout.

Parents of successful students were frustrated that the outcomes of just a few students could change the entire community’s perception of their school’s quality.

Parents of failing students were equally frustrated. This was the first time they had objective information that indicated the school had failed their children.

The educators were also frustrated — no one had prepared them to teach all students to higher standards. While they believed all students could learn, they weren’t convinced all could achieve at the levels they were being tested.

The process of changing attitudes, developing the skill and will necessary for success, and engendering shared responsibility for all students’ success took several years. Fortunately, the district accomplished this goal, but not without a lot of hard conversations.

I now recognize that these educators and parents were confronting their own beliefs about social justice. Ultimately, they had to arrive at a point of view that to achieve real success for all, social justice must be the goal for a school.

They became committed to learning and doing whatever it took to help all students achieve. The families, the children, and the educators gained powerful teaching skills and learned incredible life lessons. They learned what it means to work in a school committed to social justice and could see the positive aspects to accountability.

So what does this experience mean for professional development? A commitment to social justice begins with a recognition that injustice has occurred and that we will address that injustice through the vision we create and actions we take to ensure the success of all students.

Social justice is a difficult concept to understand. Too many people want to equate it with cultural diversity training or equal opportunity, and it is so much more. I

hope that those who take pride in supporting the learning of other educators will invest time in understanding this important issue. You can begin by engaging others in a conversation about many of the articles in this issue of *JSD*.

The most important role of professional learning is changing knowledge, skills, and beliefs of educators to ensure more students are successful in schools. Ultimately, understanding the concept of social justice at a deeper level will be key to achieving this goal. ■



•
Stephanie Hirsh (stephanie.hirsh@nsdc.org) is executive director of the National Staff Development Council.



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