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professional
learning

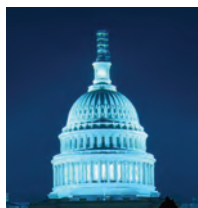
JSD

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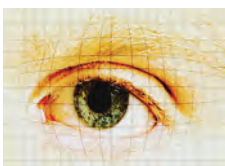
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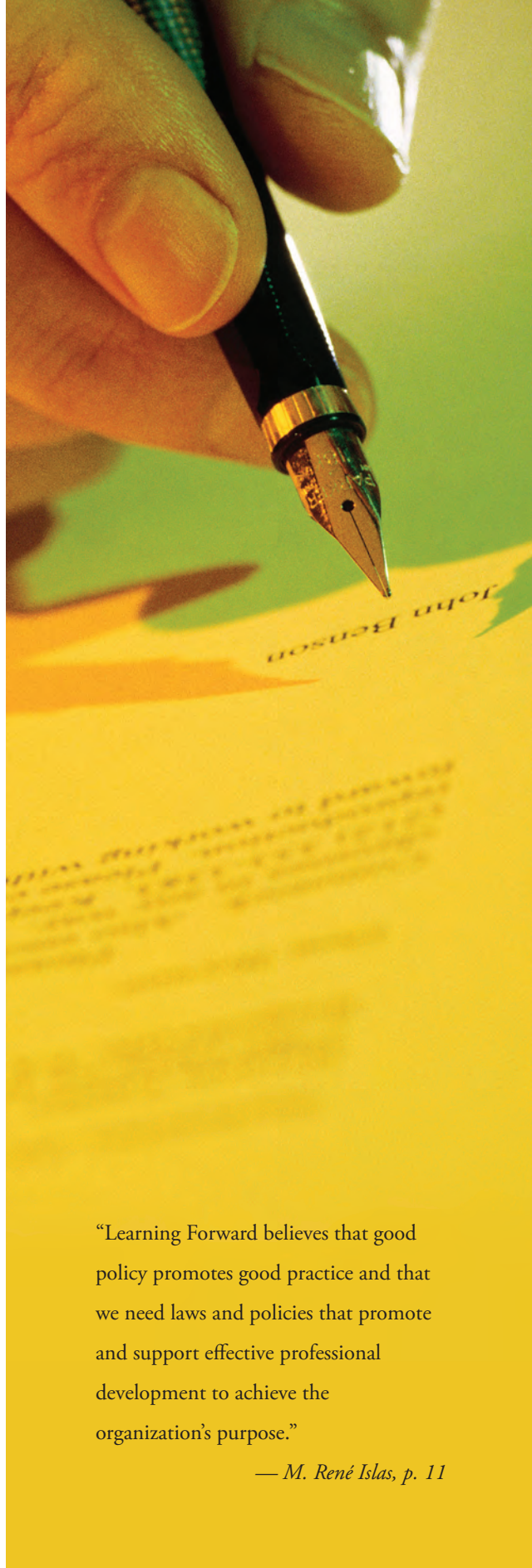
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“Learning Forward believes that good policy promotes good practice and that we need laws and policies that promote and support effective professional development to achieve the organization's purpose.”

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Math, professional development, and district leaders in this Washington district successfully partner to achieve shared student goals.



Examine the human values represented by policy

Being a step (or two or three) removed from policy makes it easy to forget that humans with particular values craft the guidelines that shape practices in any arena and at any level — local, state, provincial, or federal. Particularly during election season, I’m tempted to let my inner, rather noisy, cynic run wild and attribute any number of negative traits to any number of policy makers, and I know I’m not alone.



As I take a step or two closer to policies that matter to me, however, I see the human aspirations, beliefs, and values that drive policy

making. For a very local example, at Learning Forward we believe in the power of staff agreements that serve as guidelines for how we’ll work together. Our staff agreements include such statements as “Invest in the success of Learning Forward,” “Be open to other points of view,” and “Trust the competency of your colleagues.” The values we hold as a staff are evident in such statements.

•
Tracy Crow (tracy.crow@learningforward.org) is associate director of publications for Learning Forward.

We take our agreements seriously. We review them annually to ensure they still reflect our values and the ways we believe we can best work together to achieve our purpose. As a set of policies, we have found that our staff agreements generally lead to good practices. While these agreements don’t serve as a binding set of rules, they are a key part of our workplace culture and give us a touchstone for when we want to remind one another that we strive to operate as our best selves.

The way our staff agreements serve us as a staff in practice illustrates the clear connection between policies and values. As policies, the agreements serve as a bridge between what we aspire to as an organization and what we accomplish for our members and the field.

Take a step out from such an intimate example of policy, and we’ll find that the same principle holds. Values and beliefs drive the work that all of the writers in this issue of *JSD* describe, and the challenge is finding the most effective strategies for translating those values into policies that fit specific contexts. Kristina Peterson, a 2nd-grade teacher from Seattle, put a human face on policy one conversation at a time when she served as a policy fellow in Washington, D.C. (see p. 18). The heroes Stephanie Hirsh admires for their state-level policy work (see p. 40) ensured that their values shaped how future teachers would learn

and grow. Hayes Mizell encourages educators to establish the relationships that put them in positions to express their values in ways that ultimately shape policy (see p. 46).

Whether the operating context is corporate, educational, or governmental, and whether government is big or small, all policies are crafted with particular values in mind. This can serve as a powerful reminder that the quest for effective policies not only matters to everyone, it belongs to everyone.

CORRECTION

In “Pockets of excellence: Study explores how policy affects professional learning in 4 high-performing states” in the October issue of *JSD*, editors introduced an error in the chart on p. 53. The table summarized professional development policy provisions in four states and incorrectly stated that Vermont does not have professional development requirements for license renewal. Vermont does have professional development requirements for license renewal. A corrected version of the table appears in the online version of the article (www.learningforward.org/news/articleDetails.cfm?articleID=2158). *JSD* regrets the error. ■

NEW FROM WALLACE

Hours of Opportunity: Volumes I, II, III

RAND Corporation, October 2010

Coordinating the work of citywide stakeholders, including government, school districts, and nonprofits, holds the promise of increasing the quality of and participation in after-school programs. This study examines efforts in five cities that received The Wallace Foundation's \$58 million

investment to increase access to and quality of out-of-school learning opportunities. Attendance in high-quality after-school programs can support school attendance,

improve attitudes toward learning, and help students apply what they learn in school.

[www.wallacefoundation.org/
KnowledgeCenter/Pages/
default.aspx](http://www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/Pages/default.aspx)

MORE THAN SCORES

Problems With the Use of Student Test Scores to Evaluate Teachers

Economic Policy Institute, August 2010

Student test scores alone do not provide a sufficiently well-rounded picture of teacher quality. There is little evidence that using test scores to judge teacher effectiveness accurately identifies strong and weak teachers, nor is there evidence that incentivizing student test score gains motivates teachers to improve student learning. In this briefing paper, the Economic Policy Institute argues for a comprehensive evaluation system that more fully and accurately represents teachers' performance in the classroom and its impact on student learning.

[www.epi.org/publications/entry/
bp278](http://www.epi.org/publications/entry/bp278)



DEVELOPING EDUCATORS

Transforming Teaching and Leading: A Vision for a High-Quality Educator Development System

Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010

Teachers and administrators play a key role in supporting student achievement and promoting equity. Any efforts to improve the education system must recognize educators' need for current, specialized knowledge and skills as well as collaboration and ongoing professional development. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) argues that an educator development system — one that focuses on practice standards, growth opportunities, and

performance reviews — will help states to prepare, evaluate, and support educators more effectively. In this white paper, CCSSO outlines the basic elements of such a system and suggests several courses of action for educators and organizations.

www.ccsso.org/Documents/2010/Transforming_Teaching_and_Leading_Education_Workforce_2010.pdf

A MULTIDIMENSIONAL PICTURE

A Teacher Evaluation System That Works

National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, August 2010

TAP: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement has been used in schools across the country for more than 10 years. Offering an alternative to one-dimensional teacher evaluation methods, TAP relies on classroom observations and measurements of student achievement growth to assess teacher performance. It also provides teachers with feedback and emphasizes professional development and mentoring support. This working paper takes a look at TAP's impact, concluding that its evaluations provide a multifaceted picture of teacher effectiveness, and that teachers' skills and retention rates are positively affected by the system.

www.tapsystem.org/publications/wp_eval.pdf

TOP-TIER TEACHERS

Closing the Talent Gap: Attracting and Retaining Top-Third Graduates to Careers in Teaching

McKinsey & Company, September 2010

One often-overlooked component of improving teacher effectiveness — and thus improving student achievement — is recruiting new teachers with high academic rankings. Many countries seek and retain teachers with strong academic backgrounds, with tangible results for students. In contrast, just 23% of new teachers in the U.S. (only 14% in high-poverty schools) were in the top third of their academic class. This report considers how the U.S. could increase the number of new teachers who come from the top third of their graduating classes, and how it could pursue such a strategy in a cost-effective manner.

[www.mckinsey.com/clientervice/Social_Sector/our_practices/Education/
Knowledge_Highlights/Closing_the_talent_gap.aspx](http://www.mckinsey.com/clientervice/Social_Sector/our_practices/Education/Knowledge_Highlights/Closing_the_talent_gap.aspx)



GETTING THE SCHOOLS WE NEED

Seven Strategies for District Transformation

Education Resource Strategies, September 2010

The school systems we have are not the school systems we need. Based on this premise, Education Resource Strategies (ERS) has identified seven key strategies to help school districts transform and improve student achievement. The strategies fall into seven general categories: school funding, teaching structure, school design, instructional support, leadership, central services, and partnerships. A chart outlines the strategies and identifies common misalignments and possible responses. The report offers real-world examples and a list of recommended actions. ERS studied and worked with high-performing urban schools and districts undergoing transformation to develop the strategies. This guide is a part of a series, *Practical Tools for District Transformation*.

http://erstrategies.org/resources/details/seven_strategies



WHERE'S THE INCENTIVE?

Teacher Pay for Performance: Experimental Evidence from the Project on Incentives in Teaching

National Center on Performance Incentives, September 2010

Do financial incentives for teachers lead to improvements in student achievement? A three-year study of middle school mathematics teachers in Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools — the Project on Incentives in Teaching (POINT) — explored the effects of rewarding teachers financially for students' improved scores on standardized tests. Teachers volunteered to participate and chose their own methods for improving students' test performances. The study found that financial incentives had little, if any, correlation with student achievement. This report, a precursor to a longer and more comprehensive report scheduled to come out in the next few months, considers the implications.

www.performanceincentives.org/news/detail.aspx?pageaction=ViewSinglePublic&LinkID=563&ModuleID=48&NEWSPID=1

EVALUATION STANDARDS

Teacher Evaluation 2.0

The New Teacher Project, 2010

A new report proposes six interdependent design standards that can be used to develop a comprehensive, fair teacher evaluation system. An established annual evaluation process must include clear, well-defined, and rigorous expectations as well as regular feedback.

In addition, the evaluation process must consider multiple measures of performance (particularly the teacher's impact on student achievement) and use multiple ratings to accurately represent the range of teacher effectiveness. Finally, evaluations must have real-world meaning, both for the teacher and the school. This report describes the six standards, provides real-life examples, and acknowledges potential pitfalls.

www.tntp.org/index.php/publications/issue-analysis/view/teacher-evaluation-2.0



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HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

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ALL STATES ARE NOT ALIKE

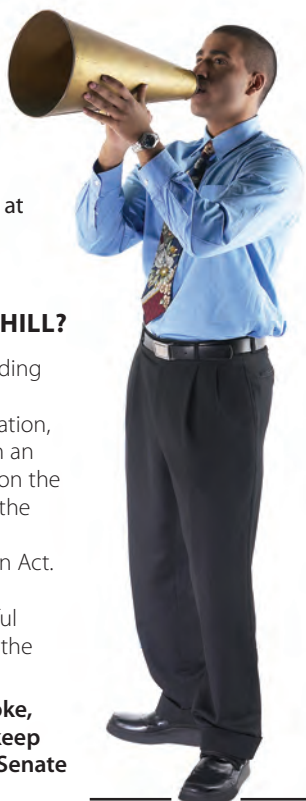
There are several models for how states determine who is on the state board (as well as who acts as the chief state school officer). Do you know how your state works?

Governor appoints state board	33 states
Elected state board	7 states
Mix of appointed/elected state board	3 states
Legislature appoints board	2 states
Mixed appointment of board (governor, other officials)	1 state
Elected board, governor appoints chief	2 states
No state board	2 states

Source: National Association of State Boards of Education. (2010, November). *2011 state board governance models*. Arlington, VA: Author. Available at www.nasbe.org/index.php/component/content/article/49-spotlight/1123-state-education-governance-models.

Standing up, speaking out

The October issue of *Teachers Teaching Teachers* highlighted one educator's trip to testify before Congress. Learn how she prepared and find related tools to boost your policy advocacy work. The full issue is available at www.learningforward.org/news/issueDetails.cfm?issueID=311.



WHAT ARE THEY SAYING ON THE HILL?

Stephanie Hirsh was one of several leading voices who testified before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions in an April 2010 hearing on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Hirsh spoke about the importance of including a powerful definition of professional development in the reauthorized law.

Videos of hearings are archived at <http://help.senate.gov>.

View the hearing in which Hirsh spoke, and explore other Senate hearings to keep track of who is influencing this critical Senate committee.

LATEST RESEARCH ON STATE POLICY

See part three of a three-phase research study from Learning Forward and the Stanford University School Redesign Network documenting the status of professional learning in the U.S.

Teacher Professional Learning in the United States: State Policies and Strategies highlights specific policy provisions in Colorado, Missouri, New Jersey, and Vermont.

The report is available at www.learningforward.org/stateproflearning.cfm.

To see the entire address, visit:
<http://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2009/06/global-education-competitiveness-summit-washington-dc.html>

Lessons from Ontario

In 2009, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty spoke at the Global Education Competitiveness Summit in Washington, D.C. He shared seven lessons learned from the success Ontario has seen in whole-system reform, with the caveat that listeners should modify international lessons to serve their purposes.

1. The drive to make progress in schools can't be a fad. Government resources and commitment are essential.
2. Education reform is not important to your government if it isn't personally important to your head of government.
3. Without teachers on board, you won't get results. Talk to teachers relentlessly.
4. You must improve teaching — and that requires building teacher capacity.
5. To achieve your goals, you must keep the pressure up all the time.
6. Once you have success, you have permission to keep investing in education.
7. To sustain success in reforming success, keep it personal — good public policy isn't enough.

Source: McGuinty, D. (2009, June 30). *Remarks on lessons learned.* Keynote address presented at the Global Education Competitiveness Summit in Washington, D.C.



POLICIES EXAMINED

Advancing High-Quality Professional Learning Through Collective Bargaining and State Policy calls for more collaboration and a common set of standards for developing policy on professional development for teachers. The study is the result of a three-year partnership among Learning Forward, National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, and Council of Chief State School Officers. This report explores how states and districts can support high-quality professional learning opportunities for educators.

Download the PDF of the report at www.learningforward.org/news/advancinghighqualityprofessionallearning.pdf.

While the report offers in-depth analyses of policies and detailed recommendations, three key ideas related to collective bargaining and state policy emerged from the study.

1	Professional development is only as effective as the expectations set for it.
2	Negotiated contract provisions and policy language about professional development are best considered within their unique contexts.
3	Professional development can be dramatically enhanced through state policy and collective bargaining agreements.

Source: American Federation of Teachers, Council of Chief State School Officers, National Education Association, & National Staff Development Council. (2010). *Advancing high-quality professional learning through collective bargaining and state policy: An initial review and recommendations to support student learning.* Dallas, TX: NSDC.

“Reaching out to thought leaders is not a strategy solely for media giants or organizations such as Learning Forward. Any group or individual working to disseminate information or change the status quo — whether in professional development, education in general, or society at large — can employ this means of spreading a message.”

Quotable

— Hayes Mizell
in “Thought leaders: Who they are, why they matter, and how to reach them” on p. 46



HIGH QUALITY DEFINED

Recognizing the need for high-quality professional learning for every educator, Learning Forward last year crafted a powerful definition of professional development. Based on a model of continuous improvement, the definition engages educators in a cycle of analyzing data, determining student and adult learning goals, designing joint lessons that employ evidence-based strategies, providing coaching to support improvement of classroom instruction, and assessing the effectiveness of educator learning and teamwork on student learning. The definition and explanation of its key points appears on pp. 16-17.

- **Stephanie Hirsh's perspective on the impact of Learning Forward in Washington, p. 76.**

THE FEDERAL POLICY LANDSCAPE

A look at how legislation affects professional development

By M. René Islas

Four years ago, Learning Forward established “affecting the policy context” as the first of five strategic priorities that would guide its efforts through 2011. Learning Forward believes that good policy promotes good practice and that we need laws and policies that promote and support effective professional development to achieve the organization’s purpose. Learning Forward set its sights on the nation’s most influential education law, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), currently authorized as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The law was set to expire and undergo improvement, or reauthorization, in 2007. We studied recent federal laws impacting professional development, developed a policy agenda with detailed recommendations for laws to guide the local practice of professional learning, and set out to advocate for the agenda and recommendations in Congress, the White House, U.S. Department of Education, and in the community of education organizations in Washington. While Congress has yet to reauthorize ESEA, Learning Forward has made a significant impact on the dialogue on professional development in our nation’s capital, and even more significantly on federal policy.

A centerpiece of Learning Forward’s work is establishing a new definition of professional development to be included in the reauthorized ESEA. If Learning Forward is able to achieve this goal, its criteria for high-quality professional development becomes part of federal statute, providing greater potential to shape local practices.

To understand the context in which Learning Forward

works to impact policy, here is a review of how current and recent education laws have addressed professional development, the Obama administration’s policies on educator effectiveness, and a look ahead to what the next reauthorization of ESEA will say about professional development.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN RECENT AUTHORIZATIONS OF ESEA

The two most recent authorizations of ESEA are the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 (IASA) and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). Both iterations of ESEA focus significant attention on teacher quality and professional development. The laws provide guidance to state and local school systems on professional development and structure programs that include funding for professional development.

Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994

The IASA begins with a focus on professional development. Title I of the law reviews 12 findings based on what Congress learned during the previous authorization of ESEA. The fifth finding states, “Intensive and sustained professional development for teachers and other school staff, focused on teaching and learning and on helping children attain high standards, is too often not provided” (1994). A few lines later, the law highlights that one of Congress’ purposes for the law is “significantly upgrading the quality of instruction by providing staff in participating schools with substantial opportunities for professional development.” These two statements of congressional understanding and intent show how strongly Congress felt about professional development.

Congress also established programs dedicated to professional development within Title I and Title II of the IASA. Title II of IASA, named the Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development Program, removed requirements to focus on federally designated subjects, such as mathematics and science, required by the program's predecessor. Instead, Title II pushed states and local school districts to develop comprehensive and long-term professional development plans aligned to a serious assessment of system needs. Then-U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley wrote that, through the program, "the department is trying to encourage professional development that is sustained, intensive, and high-quality, and will lead to changes in classroom instruction and student learning" (Riley, 1993).

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

Only two days after President George W. Bush was sworn into office, he published his plan for education, which he named No Child Left Behind. The document was billed as the president's blueprint for education reform. The blueprint built on the reforms his father, President George H.W. Bush, and then-Gov. Bill Clinton introduced during the 1989 Charlottesville Education Summit. No Child Left Behind established four pillars of reform: accountability, a focus on what works, flexibility, and the empowerment of parents. Within the context of doing what works in education, Bush addressed professional development and teacher quality. Specifically, the president's outline noted that federal law should set high standards for professional development (Bush, 2000). This blueprint served as the organizing framework for updating ESEA.

Two years after Bush unveiled his blueprint, Congress passed

the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The law picked up on the president's call for high standards for professional development (2001). The law codifies a formal definition of professional development. It includes key elements such as linking professional development to schoolwide and districtwide improvement plans, requiring experiences that are sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused, and prohibiting one-day or short-term workshops or conferences. The definition of professional development is the longest definition included in the law. This demonstrates the seriousness with which the administration and Congress treated professional development.

While the new definition created a new standard in federal law and established an understanding in the field that professional development must be sustained in order to be effective, the sheer weight of the definition made it difficult for the U.S. Department of Education to monitor the fidelity of local implementation. Another factor diluting the impact of the new standard for professional development in NCLB was the fact that the leadership within the U.S. Department of Education emphasized accountability for student results over teacher quality initiatives.

President Obama's policy on educator effectiveness

President Barack Obama released *A Blueprint for Reform*, detailing his vision for a reauthorized ESEA (2010). The blueprint, like its predecessor, identifies general principles of reform. In this case, the president highlighted five pillars of reform:

1. College- and career-ready students;
2. Great teachers and leaders in every school;
3. Equity and opportunity for all students;

SPECIFIC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

Here is the definition of professional development that appears in the School Improvement Fund program from the U.S. Department of Education.

B-6. What is job-embedded professional development?

Job-embedded professional development is professional learning that occurs at a school as educators engage in their daily work activities. It is closely connected to what teachers are asked to do in the classroom so that the skills and knowledge gained from such learning can be immediately transferred to classroom instructional practices. Job-embedded professional development is usually

characterized by the following:

- It occurs on a regular basis (e.g. daily or weekly);
- It is aligned with academic standards, school curricula, and school improvement goals;
- It involves educators working together collaboratively and is often facilitated by school instructional leaders or school-based professional development coaches or mentors;
- It requires active engagement rather than passive learning by participants; and
- It focuses on understanding what and how students are learning and on how to address students' learning needs, including reviewing student work and achievement data and collaboratively

planning, testing, and adjusting instructional strategies, formative assessments, and materials based on such data.

Job-embedded professional development can take many forms, including, but not limited to, classroom coaching, structured common planning time, meetings with mentors, consultation with outside experts, and observations of classroom practice.

When implemented as part of a turnaround model, job-embedded professional development must be designed with school staff.

Source: U.S. Department of Education. (2010, June 29). *Guidance on School Improvement Grants under section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*. Washington, DC: Author.

4. Raise the bar and reward excellence; and
5. Promote innovation and continuous improvement.

Obama's educator effectiveness proposals in the "Great Teachers and Great Leaders" theme of the blueprint includes collaborative professional development, the creation of teacher and principal evaluation systems, and the equitable distribution of effective educators. The professional development proposals include many points advocated by Learning Forward.

While Obama has not yet succeeded in securing the reauthorization of the ESEA, he has had an opportunity to shape education policy and practice. The global financial crisis prompted Congress to pass economic stimulus legislation, called the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), providing billions of dollars to states and localities. Much of the funding made available by ARRA was directed at education. One new program authorized under ARRA, Race to the Top, provides insight into the president's view of professional development.

In defining the new program's competition priorities, the administration emphasized creating educator evaluation systems paired with professional development, professional development as an instrument to improve practice in the nation's persistently lower-performing schools, creating data systems to support instructional improvement, and evaluating the impact of professional development on practice and student achievement. Obama also directed new funds to programs created under the Bush administration, such as the Teacher Incentive Fund and the School Improvement Fund, to create policy and shape practice. In the Teacher Incentive Fund, the Obama administration emphasizes that effective performance compensation systems would include professional development to support teachers in improving and acquiring merit pay. In the School Improvement Fund, targeted to the nation's worst schools, the U.S. Department of Education provides the most specific guidance on professional development. The very detailed definition of professional development (see sidebar on p. 12) emphasizes collaboration, alignment, and the need for teachers to be actively engaged in learning rather than passive recipients of information. The nonregulatory guidance provided by the school improvement grants is perhaps the best insight as to how the administration will treat professional development in the reauthorization of ESEA. This definition is very closely aligned with Learning Forward's vision for professional development.

FORECASTING FUTURE LAW AND POLICY ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The legislative outlook is dim for Congress to reauthorize ESEA before the session ends. As anticipated, this year's mid-term elections brought significant changes to both houses of Congress and their overall political makeup. This also means that Congressional committees face significant changes in composition, particularly with the leadership changing from Democratic to Republican in the U.S. House of Representatives.

With all of this change pending, it is difficult to make predictions about the reauthorization of ESEA. It is even more challenging to predict how specific policies, such as those shaping professional development, will resolve. What we can do at this stage is to study where there is consensus, leverage it, and re-educate members of Congress to ensure that they make the best policies when it is time to reauthorize the law.

Here is where we stand now:

1. Members of Congress and the administration understand that professional development is a critical lever influencing teacher effectiveness;
2. Members of Congress and the administration see the need to improve educator evaluation systems and link them to professional development;
3. There seems to be consensus among Democrats that professional development must occur among teams of educators as part of the regular school day; and
4. There seems to be consensus among Democrats and Republicans that investments in professional development ought to be evaluated for impact on teacher performance and student achievement.

Learning Forward remains committed to advocating for effective professional development. For the most part, our efforts seem to have resonated with policy makers, but we have several hurdles to clear. Most specifically, we must protect against the limited use of professional development to remediate individual teachers. We must continue to define the power of professional development to improve the overall teaching effectiveness across the school system. I am confident that if we as advocates practice persistence we will see long-lasting improvements in federal policy on professional development that supports great practice at the local level.

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Key points in Learning Forward’s definition of professional development

1. FOSTERS COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Because teachers have traditionally worked and sought professional development on their own, their learning opportunities have benefited only them and the students assigned to their classes. To achieve ambitious school performance and student learning goals, schools must strive to provide effective teaching schoolwide. Effective professional development fosters collective responsibility for all students rather than individual responsibility for some students. Professional development conducted in teams creates an environment of shared responsibility.

In the corporate world, team-based organizations are largely successful in having all of the people in the firm feel accountable and responsible for the operation and success of the entire enterprise, not just a few people in senior management positions (Farren, 1999; Gregory, 1999).

2. PRIMARILY OCCURS SEVERAL TIMES PER WEEK

It is the responsibility of professionals to continuously improve their knowledge and practice every day. High-performing businesses understand this notion. Randy Nelson, dean of Pixar University, the professional development arm at one of the most successful movie production companies, explains that learning is the secret to the company’s success: “We’re trying to create a culture of learning, filled with life-long learners. ... Every employee is encouraged to devote up to four hours a week, every week, to his or her education.” This is part of everyone’s work (Taylor & LaBarre, 2006).

In education, we need this type of workday learning, learning that takes place when teachers are at school and requires that districts make time for learning and improving practice. Many schools have schedules to ensure this. Before- and after-school meetings work for some, early-release days work for others, and fine-tuned schedules work for others. When teacher learning is a priority, schools can find strategies to put it in place.

3. CONTINUOUS CYCLE OF IMPROVEMENT

American business knows the importance of continuous improvement. Businesses compete for the recognition asso-

Learning Forward is seeking legislative amendments to include this definition in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. These amendments will clarify what practices qualify for federal, state, and district funding, while stating that professional development needs to directly impact a teacher’s classroom practices and student achievement.



(34) PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT — The term “professional development” means a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement —

1

(A) Professional development **fosters collective responsibility** for improved student performance and must be comprised of professional learning that:

(1) is aligned with rigorous state student academic achievement standards as well as related local educational agency and school improvement goals;

(2) is conducted among educators at the school and facilitated by well-prepared school principals and/or school-based professional development coaches, mentors, master teachers, or other teacher leaders;

2

(3) **primarily occurs several times per week** among established teams of teachers, principals, and other instructional staff members where the teams of educators engage in a **continuous cycle of improvement** that —

3

(i) evaluates student, teacher, and school learning needs through a thorough review of data on teacher and student performance;

(ii) defines a clear set of educator learning goals based on the rigorous analysis of the data;

(iii) achieves the educator learning goals identified in subsection (A)(3)(ii) by implementing coherent, sustained,

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and evidenced-based learning strategies, such as lesson study and the development of formative assessments, that improve instructional effectiveness and student achievement;

(iv) **provides job-embedded coaching** or other forms of assistance to support the transfer of new knowledge and skills to the classroom;

(v) regularly assesses the effectiveness of the professional development in achieving identified learning goals, improving teaching, and assisting all students in meeting challenging state academic achievement standards;

(vi) informs ongoing improvements in teaching and student learning; and

(vii) that **may be supported by external assistance.**

(B) The process outlined in (A) may be supported by activities such as courses, workshops, institutes, networks, and conferences that:

(1) must address the learning goals and objectives established for professional development by educators at the school level;

(2) advance the ongoing school-based professional development; and

(3) are provided by for-profit and nonprofit entities outside the school such as universities, education service agencies, technical assistance providers, networks of content-area specialists, and other education organizations and associations.

4

5

ciated with the Baldrige Award and the company results associated with it. While most schools believe they are in the business of continuous improvement, the steps outlined in the definition describe a process that leads to results for students.

4. PROVIDES JOB-EMBEDDED COACHING

A preponderance of research in education as well as business shows that while adults are exposed to new ideas and practices in workshop settings and team meetings, they need on-the-job support to make the new ideas part of their daily routines (Joyce & Calhoun, 1996; Joyce & Showers, 2002). In evaluating this evidence, Odden et al. (2007) conclude that states reap greater benefits in terms of student achievement when they invest in classroom-based coaches as opposed to more costly and less effective innovations, including smaller class size or full-day kindergarten.

Similarly, businesses have found success in building employee knowledge by having experienced employees who demonstrate “deep smarts” — that is, those with a corporate understanding at a systemic level — methodically and individually share their insights about the company’s processes and problems (Leonard & Swap, 2004).

5. MAY BE SUPPORTED BY EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE

Educators guided by data on their students and school are in the best position to identify the help they need to address their most important challenges. On occasion, answers are not available inside the school and must be sought from experts outside. King and Newmann (2000) found that “ensuring the constant interaction of great ideas inside and outside an organization promotes improvement for all.” Any organization enlisting external assistance must ensure that the help they seek aligns with the internal goals of the school or company.

When GE was looking to boost its leadership practices, CEO Jack Welch sought help from an outside expert, Noel Tichy. The result: the development of an organization-wide culture that embraced teaching and learning, an emphasis on results, and the ability to adapt and change (Rothenberg, 2003). The company achieved its goals under the skillful guidance of an outside expert.

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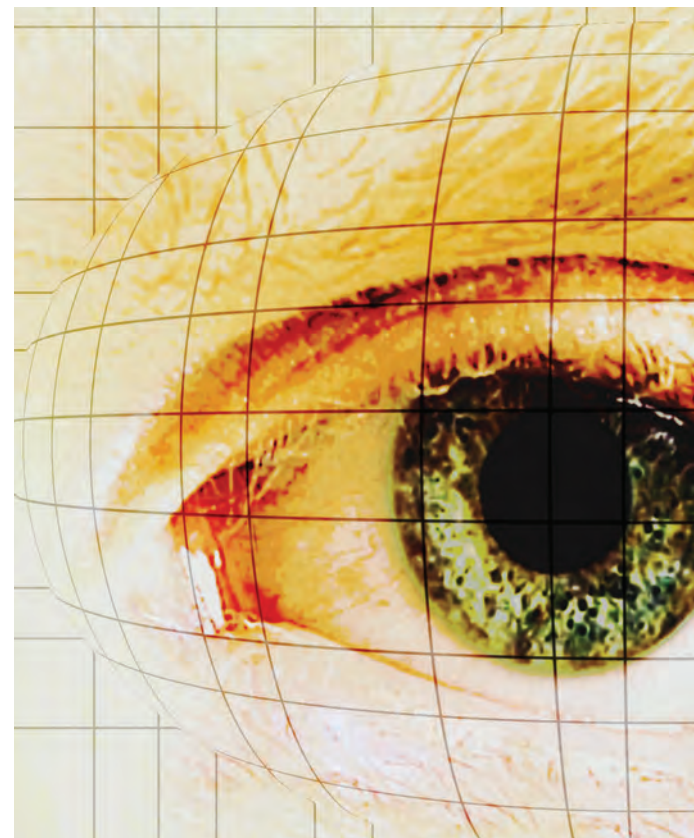
THE VIEW INSIDE THE BELTWAY

**SEATTLE TEACHER TRADES IN HER CHALK
FOR A CHANCE TO BE A LEGISLATIVE FELLOW**

By Kristina Peterson

National education reform happens with or without teacher input, but teachers are increasingly finding ways to enter the policy dialogue. In addition to traditional union representation and direct contact with elected representatives, emerging web 2.0 tools have created a new level of interaction between teachers and policy makers. I am a classroom teacher who sat squarely at the nexus of these interactions for 11 months as a legislative fellow with the Education and Labor Committee in the House of Representatives. In that role, I listened and responded to groups and individuals who came to our office to discuss federal education legislation. Throughout the year, I learned a variety of ways current and former teachers engage in policy.

Many citizens — teachers included — find it easy to identify problems with education. Policy often offers solutions to these problems. Policy is the seed of any law and the rationale behind regulations. Policy discussions involve those who craft laws, those who carry out regulations, and those who care about and are affected by an issue. How problems are defined and which solutions are considered



depend on the political climate, public opinion on the degree of the problem, and the base of support for implementing any solutions.

A former Chicago Public Schools teacher who is now working as a Democratic aide says it this way: “What I love about education policy is much like what I love about teaching. It presents complex problems that require outside-the-box thinking, close collaboration with diverse groups of people, and creative solutions.”

TEACHERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The education reform climate can be summed up as “the time of the teacher.” Every stakeholder recognizes the impact teachers have on student achievement, persistence, and retention. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan’s speeches regularly focus on teacher preparation, evaluation, and compensation (www.ed.gov/news/speeches). Vicki Phillips, director of Education and College Ready Initiatives at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, recently posted “Teachers Matter Most” on the foundation’s blog, summarizing the foundation’s initiative to identify effective teaching (www.gatesfoundation.org/foundation-notes/Pages/vicki-phillips-teachers-matter-most-100710.aspx). Congressional members share their view that teach-



“I decided to interrupt my teaching career and find a way to serve, learn, and grow that was outside my comfort zone.”

— Kristina Peterson

ers are the most important factor affecting student achievement during a Congressional hearing on “Supporting America’s Educators: The Importance of Quality Teachers and Leaders” (<http://edlabor.house.gov/hearings/2010/05/supporting-americas-educators.shtml>). A recent article in the *New York Times* highlights research that shows the relationship between a person’s economic success and his or her kindergarten teacher (Leonhardt, 2010).

This focus on teachers is seen as the lever by which the situation for America’s schoolchildren may be improved. Placed at the center of the education policy arena, teachers have the opportunity to speak up and define the policy implications of their profession.

I taught math and science to 5th through 12th graders at an independent school in Seattle for 11 years. In fall 2008, inspired by my former students’ participation in the presidential election, I decided to interrupt my teaching career and find a way to serve, learn, and grow that was outside my comfort zone. I was awarded an Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship. I was drawn to the program’s goal to “increase understanding, communication, and cooperation between legislative and executive branches and the science, mathematics, and technology education community” (Triangle Coalition, n.d.). My husband gave

WHEN SPEAKING WITH EDUCATION POLICY STAFFERS ...

- Be clear in your appointment request so you meet with the most appropriate staff member.
- Know current legislative proposals and be prepared to weigh in with specific recommendations.
- Come to the staffer with consensus already built around your recommendations.
- Keep it short.
- Leave a one-page summary of your recommendations.
- Remember, the person you speak with may know very little or more than you about any given issue.

me his support to manage a bicoastal marriage, and the next thing I knew, I had a government ID badge, a BlackBerry, and five business suits.

My day-to-day work differed dramatically from teaching. I sat in a cube, not a classroom. I was made a staffer with the Education and Labor Committee with similar responsibilities to those around me. My duties included writing memos to the committee chairman and members, finding and vetting witnesses for congressional hearings, and helping to draft legislation. Early on in my fellowship,

I was given the sage advice that one needs to know the “people, policy, process, and politics” to see legislation through.

SHIFTING MY WORK TASKS

Meeting people came naturally. I learned to exchange business cards and quickly note on the backs of the ones I received the date I met the person and any key details to our conversation. I was saved by those notes more than once because I learned that my supervisors expected me to answer their questions quickly. I didn’t need to know the exact answer right away, but I needed to know whom to contact to find the answer within a very short time frame. I became comfortable reaching out to people I didn’t know well by e-mail or phone, and learned that most of those I contacted were honored to know their opinions were being considered.

Knowledge of people was also important for proposing witnesses for congressional hearings, so I kept an eye out for those education experts who were excellent public speakers and versatile but still focused under questioning.

I went from novice to emerging in my understanding of education policy by attending briefings and reading reports. Key references included Christopher Cross’ *Political Education* (2003) for understanding the history of education policy and *Education Week* for the latest news. I tracked important events in science and math education by reading legislative updates from the National

Science Teachers Association (www.nsta.org) and the Triangle Coalition (<http://trianglecoalition.blogspot.com>). I attended briefings at the Department of Education, presentations on Capitol Hill by groups specifically interested in reaching congressional staff, and others around Washington, D.C., that were sponsored by nonprofit organizations, policy shops, think tanks, and universities. Educators outside the D.C. area can keep track of these events and briefings through webcasts. Most organizations provide web sites with links to live and archived events, podcasts, and briefing reports. See a few examples in the box at top right.

Education blogs were also an asset. For example, when I needed information quickly on the California legislature’s activity related to its Race to the Top application, I turned to Educated Guess (<http://educatedguess.org/blog>), written by John Fensterwald. When I wanted to visit a blog with authentic teacher voices, I turned to the husband-and-wife team of Sara Goldrick-Rab and Liam Goldrick at Education Optimists (<http://educationoptimists.blogspot.com>).

TEACHERS AS ADVOCATES

A current trend is the emergence of teacher groups focused

ORGANIZATIONS THAT OFFER BRIEFINGS AND POLICY INFORMATION:

- Center for American Progress
www.americanprogress.org/events
- The Education Trust
www.edtrust.org
- The Alliance for Excellent Education
www.all4ed.org
- The Wallace Foundation
www.wallacefoundation.org/Pages/default.aspx

on policy. The College Board partnered with Phi Delta Kappa to host a dialogue among teachers. From that dialogue came the report *Teachers Are the Center of Education* (2009). They also sponsored a congressional briefing and organized meetings with teachers and legislative staff. The Internet provides a way for teachers to interact. Recently, a group of National Board Certified Teachers met in California to generate policy on teacher evaluation. The group released a report entitled *A Quality Teacher in Every Classroom* (2010). The nonprofit organization Hope Street Group launched a pilot web platform to give teachers an opportunity to provide recommendations on the teacher evaluation process (www.hopestreetgroup.org/community/education). The Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession draws on teachers in crafting a broad range of policy discussions on its blog “Stories from School” (www.storiesfromschool.org).

Even with the emergence of virtual tools, face-to-face interactions are still essential. One of the most valuable things I learned during my fellowship was the importance of meeting with congressional staff. Research and consensus on policy needs to be brought to the staff’s attention in person. See suggestions for speaking with congressional staffers in the box on p. 19.

PROCESS AND POLITICS

Policy work is difficult in a different way from teaching. Policy operates on a “hurry up and wait” basis. Staff may work for several months to craft a cohesive strategy in one policy area, only to see the legislation sliced to ribbons in a compromise over other issues. Windows of opportunity open and close quickly, and there are seasons to federal legislation tied to the election cycle. Coalition building, negotiation, and compromise are constants.

Proposed legislation must find a way to move through the process that cycles between administrative proposals and congressional authorization and appropriation. The Obama administration unveiled its education priorities in the report *A Blueprint for Reform* (www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/publicationtoc.html). Furthermore, the administration expressed interest in seeing reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, most recently reauthorized in 2001 as No Child Left Behind, by promising a

The Albert Einstein Fellowship selects practicing K-12 classroom science, math, and technology teachers and places them in Washington, D.C., working with federal agencies and Congress. Find applications and further information at www.trianglecoalition.org/ein.htm.

\$1 billion bonus in education funding if the process was completed this year. Congress holds the reins for writing and passing legislation. Because major legislation like ESEA encompasses so much policy, smaller education bills are most likely to be considered as part of overall education reform in ESEA. Both houses of Congress have held numerous hearings on ESEA and are poised to introduce their versions of ESEA. The timing of any policy depends on the process and politics.

There are general guidelines to the process, but these shift with the political landscape. From outside of Washington, it is easy to become impatient with the process. From the inside, it is amazing that anything can pass when there are so many ways for a bill to get snagged and only one impossibly narrow route to passage. Delays are often caused by a crowded agenda and the fact that the party in the majority is only interested in bringing legislation to a vote when it is likely to pass; rushing a vote may mean it fails. Passage in one chamber does not guarantee action in the other. Agreements negotiated between House and Senate versions inevitably lead to changes, so victories are celebrated along the process path by each contributor.

Many of the people involved in policy have formerly served in the classroom. I met former teachers now working in Congress, with the administration, with the Department of Education, and those working as lobbyists. When I asked one former teacher why she left teaching to pursue policy she said, “I don’t like to consider myself in one field or another. I have struggled continuously with whether I should be in the classroom or on the Hill, asking myself, ‘Do I want to have a substantial impact on fewer students or a diminished impact on many students? How can I best use my skills to better the field of education?’ ”

Many times during the past year, I reflected on the unique nature of the American legislative system that provides so many avenues for citizens to engage. Not everyone is able to or inter-

ested in interrupting his or her teaching career like I did, but avenues are increasingly available to find like-minded educators and work toward solutions.

Working on policy is hard, but in a different way than teaching. It requires patience, excellent communication skills — especially in difficult situations — and a view of the overall goal with simultaneous attention to detail.

Maybe they are not that different after all.

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BUSINESS TEACHERS GO TO WORK

AND STUDENTS GET THE DIVIDENDS

By GERALYN E. STEPHENS

Teacher internships give business education teachers the opportunity to increase their industry skill proficiency levels. Such experiences can help business education teachers focus on developing relevant technical knowledge and skills to better prepare students for technically enhanced work environments and demonstrate competency on technical assessments covering industry recognized standards. Thanks to the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV), this professional learning strategy is becoming more common for business education teachers.

Perkins IV redefined professional development for business education teachers. Traditionally, the most common forms of professional development reported by principals are conference attendance and workshops (Stone, III, Kowske, & Alfeld, 2004). Such activities are discouraged under Perkins IV. No longer could professional development consist of one-day or short-term workshops or conferences (Perkins IV, Sec. 124, B). Therefore, identifying

effective and productive strategies to meet the new professional development standards became both a challenge and an opportunity resulting from Perkins IV. One option encouraged by language in the legislation is work-based professional development for teachers. Perkins IV resources may be used to provide work-based professional development to “ensure that teachers and personnel stay current with all aspects of an industry.” Funds can also be used for internship programs that provide relevant business experience (Perkins IV, Section 135, (b)(5) (B-C)).

Perkins IV supports professional development that allows secondary teachers, academic and occupational, to gain insight into what skills and knowledge students will use in the world of work. The legislation supports providing teach-





ers with opportunities to stay current with the needs, expectations, and methods of today's workplace. Funding for professional development for all faculty engaged in teaching occupational students encourages collaboration that will yield more rigorous integrated academic and business education curriculum. Such applied learning helps ensure students develop a higher level of academic and industry knowledge and skills in preparation for entry-level jobs.

WORK-BASED LEARNING

Work-based learning is the “integration of workplace experiences and career and technical education curriculum” (Brown, 2003, p. 1). Work-based learning is not new to business education. In fact, this is what differentiates career-focused education from traditional academic content areas. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 brought work-based learning to the forefront. The legislation requires that all business education students have planned experiences at business and industry worksites through work-based learning. To support those efforts, many teachers also participated in related industry-based learning opportunities.

Teacher internships are industry-based experiences where teachers are immersed in the operational priorities, challenges, and strategies of a host business (Lynn, Hales, & Wiener, 2007). Internships provide teachers the opportunity to become fully engaged in day-to-day operations as they work on relevant tasks for an extended period of time. McCarthy (2005) found that teachers want professional development that provides information for effectively connecting classroom learning to the world of work. Internships help teachers make their instruction more relevant to students through experiences that increase their knowledge of jobs, career fields, and job opportunities in the community. Teachers develop skills that meet industry requirements and form strong partnerships with local businesses. Internships provide teachers with hands-on experiences with new equipment and technologies used in the occupation (Luft, 1999).

Business and industry also benefit from teacher internships. Companies use the services of a worker who is knowledgeable and skilled in their industry. Teachers seldom need training beyond an orientation and are ready to work almost immediately. Internships give the host organization's employees a closer view of what is happening in schools and provides a platform for teachers to develop professional relationships outside of school. Researchers found that interpersonal networks developed in the workplace are vital to professional growth (e.g. Cho & Imel, 2003). Teacher internships provide the teacher and his or her work-based colleagues opportunities to develop such networks. Most often, these relationships continue beyond the placement when the host company provides other services and

LEARNING IN THE FIELD

By Arlene Gibson

I teach fashion marketing, and recently I participated in a four-week educator internship in the summer at an area Macy's department store. I hoped to be able to better integrate academics through school-based projects and build and strengthen business partnerships. I also hoped to transfer my learning of the world of work to the fashion merchandising classroom and assist students to develop their problem-solving, decision-making, and communication skills. I also expected to be able to encourage exploration of careers through academic lessons and experiential learning opportunities.

Given the externship model we use in our district, I was responsible for:

- Creating a learning contract with professional development goals with the career and technical education program coordinator;
- Contacting the Macy's store manager to discuss my goals;
- Developing a schedule with the store manager;
- Participating in scheduled workplace activities and observing organization operations, participating in meetings, interviewing staff, and completing tasks;
- Completing a daily reflection journal;
- Developing ideas for creating lesson plans that link academics and authentic work experiences;
- Thanking employers and sending evaluations;
- Developing new or revised lessons, new projects, and other changes to current teaching based on the internship experience;
- Teaching lessons to students; and
- Using a rubric to evaluate the education internship experience.

The experience of observing and learning more about the world of work and how academics can be applied to authentic experiences impacted my students' future careers in fashion merchandising. More than 50% of my students were placed in fashion related co-op experiences, and two students were promoted to retail managerial positions. One student even became a personal shopper after I shadowed a personal shopper and shared that experience. I'm proud that my experience led to such outcomes.

Arlene Gibson is principal/director of River Rouge High School/New Tech International Academy in River Rouge, Mich.



Gibson

resources such as career-day speakers and job-shadowing sites for students (Foncault, 2002).

ACADEMICS

Teacher internships that provide work opportunities for academic instructional staff help students in the long run. Academic instructional staff may include English, mathematics, or science teachers. Reese (2005) says that academic teachers must see and experience what the workplace demands. Academic teachers with an internship experience can make connections between their content, the skills emphasized in business education courses, and the expectations of the workplace. Teaching teams that include an academic teacher and a business education teacher participating together in a workplace internship has benefits for both the business and academic sides of the curriculum. Perkins IV clearly promotes this as a desired professional development approach. Ultimately, teaching teams will work together to create instruction for students that emphasizes application of new knowledge in business and industry scenarios. When team members share their work-based experiences, they can collaborate to plan and deliver academic content with real-world applications (Bidwell, 1997). Team internships also have the potential to help members create stimulating learning environments where students understand the importance of strong academics and are able to conceptualize how academic knowledge and skills can be applied to the world of work (Bennett, Milicevic, & Dolan, 1998). The relationships and mutual respect that these teachers develop are another benefit of such teaming.

TIMING AND OUTCOMES

Teacher internships usually happen during school breaks or summer. Summer internships have several benefits for teachers. Summer placements allow them to focus on internship duties without classroom responsibilities. The extended break during summers also gives teaching teams time to collaboratively design instructional units and lessons for the next year. When educators have determined the job sites and time frame, the next step is to outline outcome expectations for the teacher internship.

Ideally, business education teachers and their industry hosts will work together to detail learning outcomes to accurately match the teacher's needs with the host company's work. When a teacher has a plan for what he or she wants to experience and achieve during the internship, the host company can maximize its time and resources. For example, if the teacher would like to learn to use new equipment, the host may arrange for the teacher to attend an on-site training session and then work on a project where the equipment is used extensively. Panella (2007) learned to use a computerized numerical control machine to be able to later help carpentry students gain skills in this specialized equipment and exceed industry expectations for entry-level employees. The industry relationships in this case allowed the school to secure funding to purchase a machine for classroom use.

Business education teacher internships can lead to the teacher intern acquiring an industry credential. If there is an industry technical assessment that results in a license or certification, the teacher intern may choose to gain the knowledge or skills necessary to successfully complete the assessment. An example would be the Microsoft Office Specialist Certification. Business education teacher interns could perfect their skills by preparing documents and presentations needed by the host company using the software before sitting for the exam. Because Perkins IV requires career and technical education programs to prepare students for technical assessments in their programs of study, having teachers who have completed the assessments helps students. These teachers can outline expectations and share their experiences related to the assessments.

CURRICULUM

Journaling is a valuable component in the internship experience. An intern's journal captures new skills, attitudes, and technical information required by the job. The journal can become a source for teaching ideas when the teacher intern keeps track of work activities that can be integrated into teaching. The journal ensures that the teacher intern will keep track of the most significant concepts to use in instructional planning.

When teaching teams participate in an internship, they first review the academic and occupational curriculum to determine where natural links occur. Together, they review which working experiences best inform lesson planning. Questions to consider in curriculum planning include:

- Where does the new information fit?
- What aspects of the curriculum are no longer relevant?
- What teaching methods need to be changed to deliver the new concepts?
- What are realistic student performance outcomes?
- What additional supplies or equipment need to be secured to complement the lessons?

Next, teams identify where the new information is best integrated and develop instructional units and lessons using these new work-based experiences as foundations. When teachers put into practice the knowledge and skills gained in their internship placements, they are prepared to create exciting learning experiences for their students by teaching lessons that include their firsthand knowledge of industry expectations.

LEARNING INFLUENCED BY POLICY

Perkins IV has prompted a review of anything considered to be professional development. The legislation has also expanded how resources can be used to increase the knowledge and skill levels of both academic and occupational teachers. Business education teacher internships are an effective way to provide current and useful real world-of-work experiences.

Teachers with these experiences are better able to align content with relevant industry expectations. When they apply what

they learn in industry, educators are better able to help students understand how their classroom learning applies to business practice.

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ALBERTA UNITES ON TEACHING QUALITY

By Tracy Crow

Education policy in the province of Alberta is set by Alberta Education, a ministry led by the province's minister of education. There are two key policies or ministerial orders that guide professional learning in Alberta. The Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 1997) outlines the knowledge, skills, and attributes that teachers are expected to possess. The standard specifies competencies for those teachers holding interim cer-

tificates (typically teachers in their first two years of practice) and permanent certificates. (See the list of knowledge, skills, and attributes in the box on p. 31.) The Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy (Alberta Education, 2008) aims to ensure that each teacher's ongoing actions, judgments, and decisions are in the best educational interests of students and support optimum learning.

Val Olekshy, executive director of the Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium, is careful to point out that she is not part of the government. She adds that it is comforting to work in a policy environment that is extremely col-

laborative. “What’s so unique about our standards is that when the ministry established these policies, it worked with our teachers association to talk about what teachers need to be responsible for to remain current. They really focused on teachers’ career-long professional growth,” said Olekshy.

In Alberta, teachers are required to complete an annual professional growth plan that addresses their learning priorities, both in relation to the specifics of the Teaching Quality Standard and also to meet their own expectations about where they know they need to grow, according to Michael Podlosky, coordinator of the Alberta Teachers’ Association’s professional development program area. The Alberta Teachers’ Association supports the creation and support of these plans. The association stresses that exercising professional judgment in diagnosing and responding to student learning needs and in assessing their progress is central to what it means to be a teacher in Alberta. Therefore, teachers have a professional responsibility to keep abreast of new developments in education and to develop their professional practice (Alberta Teachers’ Association, n.d.).

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

Partnerships and collaborations are at the heart of Alberta’s implementation of high-quality professional learning, according to Olekshy. In her role as director at the Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium, one of seven learning consortia in Alberta, Olekshy is part of a system that ensures that teachers, schools, and districts have the support they need to implement provincial curriculum and other program initiatives. In September 2010, a partnership of stakeholders in the province released *A Guide to Support Implementation: Essential Conditions* (Alberta’s Education Partners, 2010). Crafted with the aim to support the province’s educational change efforts, the document describes the conditions that need to be addressed to ensure successful implementation of education initiatives.

“The essential conditions document grew from the questions that our ministry asked us about how we know what the impact is of our professional development,” said Olekshy. The document is based on a thorough review of current research and promising practices to help educators understand the characteristics and conditions necessary for successful implementation of any education endeavor.

“The document has no official status [as policy],” Olekshy says. However, every major education stakeholder group in Alberta has endorsed the guide. “Several organizations worked together to say, ‘This is what we collectively feel is right.’” Then it is up to school jurisdictions to determine if they will follow this model.

Olekshy says those who worked collaboratively on the guide believe all stakeholders have a shared responsibility for supporting implementation. “It’s not just about shap-

TEACHING QUALITY STANDARD:

REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ATTRIBUTES

Quality teaching occurs when the teacher’s ongoing analysis of the context and the teacher’s decisions about which pedagogical knowledge and abilities to apply result in optimum learning by students.

All teachers are expected to meet the Teaching Quality Standard throughout their careers. However, teaching practices will vary because each teaching situation is different and in constant change. Reasoned judgment must be used to determine whether the Teaching Quality Standard is being met in a given context.

The following descriptors cover the range of expertise that teachers in Alberta are expected to be able to access in effectively teaching students.

- Teachers’ application of pedagogical knowledge, skills, and attributes is based in their ongoing analysis of contextual variables, such as student, regulatory, school, parent, and societal variables.
- Teachers understand the legislated, moral, and ethical frameworks within which they work.
- Teachers understand the subject disciplines they teach.
- Teachers know there are many approaches to teaching and learning.
- Teachers engage in a range of planning activities.
- Teachers create and maintain environments that are conducive to student learning.
- Teachers translate curriculum content and objectives into meaningful learning activities.
- Teachers apply a variety of technologies to meet student learning needs.
- Teachers gather and use information about student learning needs and progress.
- Teachers establish and maintain partnerships among school, home, and community, and within their own schools.
- Teachers are career-long learners.

Source: Alberta Education, 1997.

ing the professional development that an organization like ours would provide, but describing all the factors that support adult learning,” Olekshy says.

“My favorite example is around interactive whiteboards,” said Olekshy. “We can provide a great interactive whiteboard professional development session. Then the teachers might go back to their school, and their school priorities might tell them that ‘we don’t want to use technology here because we need to focus our efforts on something else.’ Or they might go back to their classrooms and the resources

aren't there or the interactive whiteboard isn't hooked up or the teacher isn't provided time to practice. There might not be leadership in the jurisdiction or school setting to promote and support proper use of these tools to support student learning."

DEFINING THE CONDITIONS

There are seven essential conditions in the implementation guide: shared vision, leadership, research and evidence, resources, teacher professional growth, time, and community engagement. See the diagram below to understand how Alberta's stakeholders envision how the partners and the conditions all work together, with a culture of learning and shared responsibility at the center.

The guide is posted online and includes extensive information about each essential condition, with guiding questions to help educators consider all aspects of implementation as they undertake a complex planning process (www.essentialconditions.ca). For each condition, the document also asks educators to consider the evidence they will accept to know that the essential condition is being addressed.

"Let's go back to the interactive whiteboard example," Olekshy says. "If we know that we don't want teachers to learn just to turn the machine on, but we want them to learn how to infuse this tool and resource into their program so they're sup-

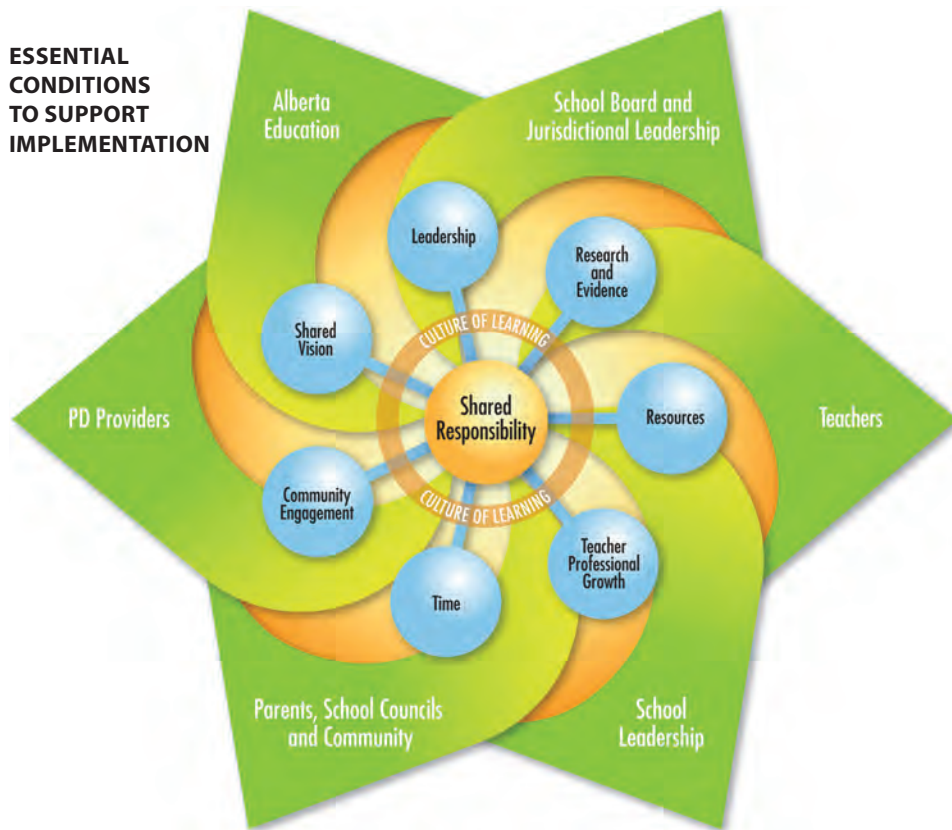
porting student learning, then we have to be aware of the shared vision for student learning. Teachers have to know that attending professional development and learning how to turn the machine on is just the first part of the journey." From there, other essential conditions — leadership, resources, time — are a part of implementing the use of a new tool like an interactive whiteboard.

Where does the professional learning come from related to these conditions? The committee that developed the guide believes that "successful implementation required the coordinated, collaborative, and comprehensive efforts of the education partners working together towards a shared vision of learning success for all students," Olekshy says. To reach this goal, the system needs to work together to support implementation — with due attention to the work and classroom demands of teachers.

"The essential conditions highlight the need for stakeholders to listen carefully to the needs of teachers to ensure learning opportunities are timely, varied and purposeful," says Michael Podlosky of the Alberta Teachers' Association. Each essential condition can be used to focus a conversation around addressing the intent to support implementation and adult learning. For example, the community engagement essential condition takes into account the broader sense of who in the community needs to be involved in any educational innovation or change.

Olekshy says, "This one's really been an important eye opener for me. We met with our First Nations, Métis, and Inuit advisory committee and used some of the essential conditions planning tool templates to plan our programs for the year. The district representatives talked about the need to be connected with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit groups. It became evident to me that I needed to be more engaged with various community groups in my role as a professional development provider. I'm going to learn a lot more in this particular content area because the group identified this as an important condition for this specific context."

Though the latest version of the essentials condition guidelines have just been released, some districts have been using it in draft form. One superintendent, Olekshy says, has used it in his district to stimulate conversation around his three-year planning. Another used it as part of a school improvement planning reflection year-end. "Ultimately, we want to know that we're supporting teachers' professional growth, and initial district use has focused on reflecting on current practice and areas they may wish to address given their desire for continuous improvement and the



Source: Alberta's Education Partners, 2010.

framework shared in the guide,” Olekshy says.

While the essential conditions work examines the complex systems required to support educational changes, an earlier document, *A Guide to Comprehensive Professional Development Planning* (Alberta’s Education Partners, 2005), specifically addresses the key elements of professional development planning. Also

created by a collaborative of Alberta stakeholders, the document describes a planning process based on evidence that considers provincial, jurisdiction, and school priorities, student data, and careful goal setting before outlining possible learning strategies and action plans.

Olekshy is optimistic about the work the province is undertaking and about how they’ve worked together thus far. “There are a number of transformational changes happening in education in our province. And at the same time, there’s a collaborative nature in the province that lets us as stakeholders work together to decide what would work best to support change,” she said. “As stakeholders, we’ll explore how to use this framework and

learn together how these guides may support school districts in planning more effectively for the changes that are coming. The

intent moving forward is to know, as professional development providers, how we can best support systems with the transformation they wish to achieve in supporting student learning.”

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“Ultimately, we want to know that we’re supporting teachers’ professional growth, and initial district use has focused on reflecting on current practice and areas they may wish to address given their desire for continuous improvement and the framework shared in the guide.”

— Val Olekshy

POLICY ACROSS *the* POND

**BRITISH RESEARCHER TALKS ABOUT
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING'S IMPACT
IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND BEYOND**

By Louise Stoll, as told to Tracy Crow

Louise Stoll, professor at the London Centre for Leadership in Learning, Institute of Education, University of London, offers a different view on policy in these excerpts from a conversation with Tracy Crow, Learning Forward's associate director of publications. Stoll lives and works in England, and her research and consulting work has taken her all over the world. In her professional learning work, Stoll emphasizes networks, learning communities, and leadership.

POLICY'S ROLE IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

I'm particularly interested in helping create capacity for learning, leaders learning, developing learning communities, and finding different ways to take my work and other people's work and help practitioners engage with it in a way that supports them in improving learning for all students. I've worked with many policy makers over the years, but my sense is that the real change comes through practice. Policy can unquestionably enable. But it can also inhibit.

We've been experiencing a policy shift in England. We're waiting for the publication soon of an education white paper, a major policy document, from the new coalition government that came into power in May this year (2010).

Five or so years ago, the previous Labour government had a thrust on what we in this country call CPD — continuing professional development. It started in our Department for Education and Skills, now called the Department for Education, which

is analogous to the U.S. Department of Education. The department was gathering a lot of research evidence about continuing professional development from a range of different angles, and then moved its organization and oversight to one of our arm's-length organizations, what we know as a "quango" (quasi-autonomous nongovernmental organization). The department also set up a National College to oversee the professional learning of school leaders. So, the Labour government put a lot of resources into professional development of teachers and leaders — an investment of time and energy, studies looking at impact and at what is effective, test beds on the cultural and leadership conditions we need, and reviews of mentoring and coaching. There were also national strategies for primary and secondary schools in literacy and numeracy. And these national strategies were continuing professional development strategies.

The thrust with this new government is much greater autonomy and power for schools, with professionals taking more responsibility for their own capacity building.

REACHING ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS

The Office for Standards in Education is our external inspection service. It's another arm's-length agency of government but is an accountability arm. Schools are involved in self-evaluation. Currently, the Office for Standards in Education comes in approximately every three years and inspects schools at short notice. Inspectors observe teaching, talk to people, and conduct student and parental surveys. There's not very much concerning professional learning in the inspection process and nothing about its benefits or the effectiveness of professional learning communities.

We're much smaller than the U.S., and we don't have the state level, although England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales have their own systems. We go straight from what would be your federal level down to local authority level — that's your district level. Now the local level is really being reduced, giving headteachers (principals) much more power and some of the resources that used to go to local authorities. The more successful schools in particular are being encouraged to become academies — like your charter schools — with power to do what they want. In many ways, the assumption now seems to be that most schools know what professional learning is and how to provide it or access it.

Local authorities don't tend to have specific professional development policies, except in relation to underperforming schools, but offer a range of professional learning opportunities that schools can access. Over the last few years, districts have had to work with schools to set targets for expected student results. The Department for Education has now told them they no longer have to do this, although they still have a role in tackling underperformance. Narrowing the achievement gap has been a priority for a few years, although we are now using the expression "closing the gap" — one I think you know.

Recently, our secretary of state, our Arne Duncan, announced an allocation of 110 billion pounds (nearly \$176 billion) as an educational endowment fund. This fund is designed to raise standards in underperforming schools and invites innovative proposals that would improve performance with measurable delivery. It's drawing on your Race to the Top program, and local authorities will be able along with various others to bid for monies. Within that, there will be a range of professional learning initiatives that people will be thinking about.

INTERSCHOOL COLLABORATION

A big thrust in this country is collaboration among schools, with increasing impetus from the new government for schools to share practice and learn from each other. This has particular implications for what we call system leadership, which is different from your system leadership, because yours is related to district leadership. Ours is about successful school headteachers (principals) who help other headteachers and schools. So for example, successful academies are being asked to make a commitment to work with a less successful school. Similarly, if a school has failed its inspection (we call that being put into "special measures"), there are often incentives for an outstanding school nearby to connect with it in a contractual way, as a federation, whereby the successful school leader and staff are helping the unsuccessful school. This assumes that successful leaders know how to pass on their knowledge. That said, there are programs through our National College for what are known as National Leaders of Education, very successful principals, to learn how to support other schools. These build on programs we've had for a number of years for consultant headteachers who work with other schools.

Outstanding school leaders have to be willing to share with others and, of course, even struggling schools have areas of good practice to share. I was working with the deputy heads (assistant principals) in a district in the west of England the other day, and one of them was telling me that a successful secondary school nearby doesn't see the need to link up with other local schools. Successful schools are at liberty just to keep everything within and keep recycling. In my experience, that attitude can sometimes lead to serious complacency — what Dean Fink and I called a "cruising" school.

There are many exciting initiatives. For example, I'm evalu-

ABOUT LOUISE STOLL

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Stoll

Stoll is author and editor of many publications including:

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ating and acting as critical friend to a professional learning community of all of the secondary and special education schools in a London school district. I would call it a learning network but they call it a professional learning community of 13 secondary schools and five special schools. They have vertical, cross-curricular teams with an assistant principal, a middle leader, and a teacher who's fairly new to teaching. Among their activities, the exciting one is a learning review in each other's schools. A team from across the professional learning community and a district colleague spend a day going around each other's schools. Each host school selects a specific focus of what the team looks at. They

have protocols and engage in learning conversations; in pairs, they interview students and teachers, observe in classrooms, look at work plans, and then process and summarize the information together, feeding it back to the host school's principal. The host school then plans how they will take the results of the review forward.

There was no mandate to do this. One of the schools

involved was using a similar strategy for its own improvement. The school was engaged by what they were doing, wondered if other schools were doing the same, and also if other schools might find it helpful. The local authority supported them. They wanted six schools to start. Nine were interested and participated in the first year. By the second year, the four who hadn't taken part wondered what the

party was about. And that's secondary schools, which in many ways can be difficult to engage.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT BASED ON RESEARCH

Inasmuch as the research that was commissioned in this country a few years ago was showing what seems to be effective types of professional learning, the government through its various agencies was trying to build on what is known and also drawing on other research in terms of building capacity for improvement. But despite what is now known about effective professional learning, there are still many teachers in this country who think that continuing professional development just means going on courses, and they don't find that very satisfying.

I have to go beyond professional learning when I talk about this. For example, here and in Ontario, and of course Michael Fullan's written a lot about this, we know that when top-down strategies work, they only work for so long, and therefore you have to have bottom-up and middle-tier support and lateral capacity building — operating at several levels at once. There are professional learning policies and practices in this country that don't come under the name of professional learning. They build on the potential of lateral capacity building through networking between schools, an orientation towards collaborative interrogation of practice, and inquiry in a supportive environment, looking at and taking a range of activities that are very focused on enhancing student learning.

An interesting example close by is in Wales, where they developed a school effectiveness framework two years ago. It's early days for them, but at the heart of that school effectiveness framework, they are focusing on professional learning communities with an emphasis on collaborative inquiry and distributed leadership. It'll be interesting to see how their and our policies develop over the next year or so and the impact they have on professional learning. ■

THE POWER OF ONE, REVISITED

Inspiring examples remind us we can all find ways to make a difference

By Stephanie Hirsh

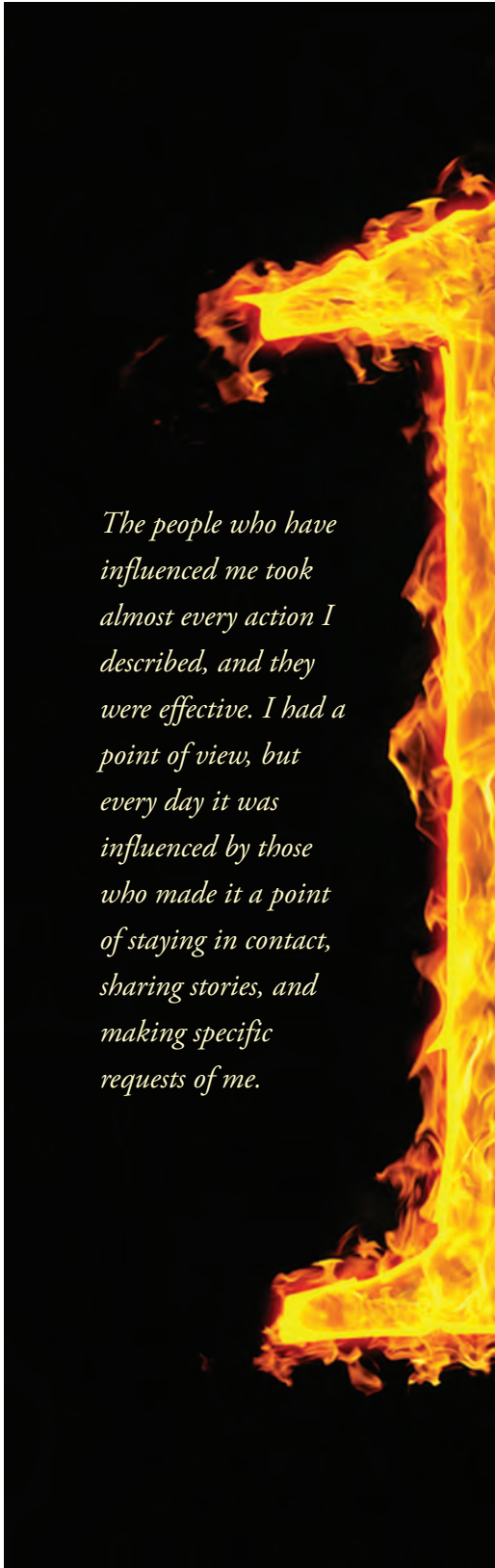
More than 10 years ago, I wrote my first version of “The Power of One” for *JSD*. I described my personal journey of discovering how one person could make a huge difference in the face of what appeared as insurmountable challenges. I described ways in which I had made such a difference and told, through the lens of a school board member, the ways I saw community and education leaders make differences as well.

People told me that the article inspired them to take actions they had never before considered. Many shared their personal success stories. Yet I am concerned that there are still too many people offering excuses rather than solutions for transforming professional learning to improve student success.

Perhaps you have heard these problems before:

- The legislature won't fund it.
- The state board won't consider it.
- The school board doesn't care about it.
- The superintendent doesn't believe it.
- Central office wants to control it.
- Principals don't have time for it.
- Parents fight it.

Fortunately, I continue to find compelling examples to contradict these beliefs. As with my examples years ago, in each case, I trace the outcomes back to one person or a small group of people.



The people who have influenced me took almost every action I described, and they were effective. I had a point of view, but every day it was influenced by those who made it a point of staying in contact, sharing stories, and making specific requests of me.



THE LEGISLATURE WON'T FUND IT.

For 25 years, Doug Miller worked for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. He was there when the legislature passed a bill requiring that all school systems set aside 1% of funds for professional development and instituting matching funds from the legislature. In his early years, Miller focused on helping school systems learn to make effective use of the resources. In his final years with the department, he fought every year to retain the financial commitment. He knew what it meant to the educators and students who benefitted from it. His intention was to not let the legislators shortchange their commitment to Missouri's educators and students.

Over time, he had many partners supporting his advocacy purpose. However, legislators knew he was the one who would be looking over their shoulders if they shortchanged that commitment. They knew that if they tried to change the law, he would be there. They knew he would gather his friends to put pressure on legislators. And, he did this from inside the state's department of education. Being a vocal critic from inside the system offers a set of pressures that those working from outside don't experience. At the same time, his position certainly strengthened his knowledge and perspective. He now works as a consultant for SuccessLink, a small nonprofit organization he formed years ago to disseminate best practices in learning in Missouri.

Miller's actions remind me of one of my favorite passages from the book *Reclaiming Our Democracy: Healing the Break Between People and Government* (Daley-Harris, 2004). This book provided inspiration for my own advocacy work. A substitute teacher founded RESULTS, an international citizens' lobby dedicated to creating the political will to end hunger, and this book tells the story of that organization. If a substitute teacher could step up and have that level of impact, surely I could influence a few policy makers on the issue of professional development. In the book, legislators talk about making a change in legislation supported by RESULTS. They admit the following: "Unless there is some force outside of you, carefully watching your every move and insisting that unnecessary compromises not be made, then you don't win the great wars, and this was one of the great wars."

Doug Miller viewed each legislative session and the professional development commitment as one of the great wars. We have evidence that it was that battle that contributed to the improved student achievement that Mis-



Doug Miller

souri achieved over the last five years.

Miller was also responsible for Learning Forward (then NSDC) getting involved in the policy aspect of professional development. Attending countless meetings with his state education colleagues, each year he would ask when we would finally take a stand on professional development and share that stand with the federal government. He was convinced that we needed to share our expertise and that the Department of Education would listen. When we hired René Islas as our first federal policy advisor, Miller took him under his wing and shared with him his view on how Learning Forward could have the greatest influence in Washington, D.C. Those early conversations guided our strategy and that work has paid off for the organization and the field. (See Hirsh's related column on this work on p. 76.) Doug Miller represents a story of the true power of one. I admire his tenacity, his fearlessness, his commitment, and his passion.

THE STATE BOARD WON'T ADOPT IT.

More than 10 years ago, I met another tempered radical. I borrow the phrase from another of my favorite books, *Tempered Radicals: How People Use Difference to Inspire Change at Work* by Debra Meyerson (2001). Tempered radicals are people who want to succeed in their organizations and live by their own values or identities, even if they are some-

how at odds with the dominant culture of their organizations. These words precisely describe another influence in my perception of the power of one, Steve Preston. When I met Preston, he worked for the Georgia Department of Education. He is now a consultant specializing in school improvement through high-impact learning environments. Once again, I found a person working in a bureaucratic system seeking ways to leverage the bureaucracy to have an impact across a state. He didn't see barriers; instead, he saw opportunities all around him.



Steve Preston

Preston wanted to discuss the latest and most important ideas influencing practice in our field. He was an advocate of standards-based professional development and solely responsible for ensuring that every school system in Georgia had whatever resources they needed to implement it. He worked in partnership with the Georgia Staff Development Council to ensure every system had guidance documents to engineer implementation of effective professional development at the system and school levels. Georgia was the first state to fund the use of NSDC's Standards Assessment Inventory for every district in the state to assess the impact of teacher professional develop-

ment. Most important for the field, because of his three-year investment in the Standards Assessment Inventory, we have data that show a predictive link between improving professional development and increasing student achievement.

I am most impressed, however, by our ongoing conversation about professional learning. As an organization, we were making a shift to emphasizing the concept of professional learning rather than professional development. We wanted people to focus on what they wanted educators to learn rather than the activities they were designing. Preston immediately embraced the language, and Georgia rules suddenly used professional learning everywhere. We started the conversation about Georgia's professional development requirements focusing on seat time rather than changes in teacher practice or student learning. I challenged Preston to consider how to make the shift to recognizing results rather than hours, and he was eager to accept that challenge. The state board of education accepted his rationale, and soon professional development requirements were transformed into Professional Learning Units with credit tied to demonstration of practice and results. I had never before witnessed such quick changes to state policy, the kind of changes that others claim will take years to achieve.

While Georgia still has work to do, Preston started the state down the path of asking the right questions. In October, we celebrated Gwinnett County Schools as winner of this year's Broad Foundation prize. This system is known for its comprehensive approach to effective professional development. My Georgia radical made sure for many years that they had resources to implement the professional development they knew was necessary to achieve their desired results.

THE COMMISSIONERS WON'T LISTEN.

Not only did she get three commissioners to listen, she got them to take a vision for effective professional learning to the state board, leading to statewide policy and practice change. Eileen Aviss-Spedding has worked for the New Jersey State Department of Education for 21 years. She is now the manager of professional standards. I think of Aviss-Spedding as a linchpin. In *Linchpin: Are You Indispensable?* (2010), Seth Godin describes a linchpin as someone who can walk into chaos and create order, someone who can invent, connect, create, and make things happen.

Like many of us who work in large organizations, Aviss-Spedding is often overwhelmed, feeling like she has many responsibilities but little authority to make things happen. Her impact comes from influencing all of those people with whom she interacts. She finds and attracts smart people, listens to them carefully, and then convinces them to help her accomplish their shared goal. She knows the steps to take and whom to convince,

and she facilitates the entire process from behind the scenes.

Aviss-Spedding knew that New Jersey needed a more powerful vision for professional development. She was able to convince the state commissioner of this need and that change would begin with a presentation of a white paper that outlined a clear vision. She helped him shape that vision by sharing her ideas and expertise. Then she coordinated a statewide task force to discuss the vision and create an action plan to move the state forward.

She understood that the important stakeholders needed to believe in and own any changes if they hoped to impact practice.



Eileen Aviss-Spedding

Aviss-Spedding is masterful at organizing groups of stakeholders, identifying the scope of their authority, investing in their learning to ensure they make the best recommendations possible, and working side by side with their leadership to craft to policy recommendations that turn into policy changes. Her fingerprints can be found on many years' worth of regulations impacting teacher induction, teacher professional development, principal preparation, principal development, and more. She works in a state known for one of the most powerful teacher and principal organizations, and she works hand in hand with all

partners until everyone agrees to do what is in the best interest of students and educators. She doesn't shy away from challenges. Because of her longevity and her role in a state agency, those who don't know her would describe her as a traditional bureaucrat. I describe her as a brilliant facilitator who leads groups to tough actions that impact students.

Aviss-Spedding faced a big test over the last three years. As she learned more about professional learning communities, she became convinced of their power to transform practice. She was determined to make sure every teacher in every school was a member of a learning community. She studied, talked to experts, examined the research, and supported a small pilot in one of the most challenged schools in the state. The impact of that pilot convinced her that this strategy for organizing schools was essential to improvement. She wrote a grant to develop a tool kit to distribute to all schools and created a plan for preparing all principals to lead learning communities. Aviss-Spedding achieved a monumental goal when her vision for schools was introduced into state board regulations. This is the first example I know of a state board saying it expects all teachers to be part of and benefit from learning community support. While leaders changed all around her, she stayed on course. Her legacy will be the significant gains New Jersey made in student achievement during her tenure in the state department. Those who know the complete story realize the role of the unassuming, hard-working, and gifted bureaucrat, my third hero, Eileen Aviss-Spedding.

Just showing up gives you access to policy makers who want to be able to report on the public input they gather. Believe me, the public that takes time to share points of view is very small. If you become a respected ally, there is no telling the level of influence you can have.

I could have chosen to highlight many other examples of the power of one. However, we know the challenges that those working in large departments face, and my heroes are inspiring models to remind us we can all find ways to overcome the barriers we face.

FIND YOUR POWER

Having served as a policy maker and learned from those who take action that leads to change, I offer suggestions for anyone interested and committed enough to become that voice of one.

Get involved in elections. The majority of policy makers are concerned about re-election. They listen to those who get involved or help in their races. While they appreciate financial contributions, they appreciate just as much those who take on the daily chores of a campaign. If you help them get elected, you become a trusted voice; they will accept your calls and listen to your requests.

Be visible at events where policy makers speak. Just showing up gives you access to policy makers who want to be able to report on the public input they gather. Believe me, the public that takes time to share points of view is very small. If you become a respected ally, there is no telling the level of influence you can have. If you wait until you have a problem to contact a policy maker, your point of view will be recorded but will not get the attention it would if you had already established your credibility.

Invite policy makers at all levels to your classroom, school, or system. Policy makers like to tell stories and stay in touch with constituents. These visits give them real-life examples of the points you make; this knowledge informs the future conversations they will need to have to meet your needs.

Become an ally with a staff member. If you are intimidated by the thought of trying to influence an elected official directly, then set your sights on someone you know who has influence on the policy maker. Make an appointment to meet the education advisor to introduce yourself; let them know you want to share your views on education.

Be respectful and appreciative of policy makers' service. Very few people who call on legislators and their staff take time to thank them for their service. People remember those who recognized they are performing a public service and acknowledge

that contribution. This courtesy makes your interactions memorable.

Make a simple request. Research your issue and understand what the policy maker can do to help. They don't have time to figure out the solution to the problem.

Always bring a solution. Ask permission to check in with them on how the effort is progressing — and then follow up.

The people who have influenced me took almost every action I described, and they were effective. I had a point of view, but every day it was influenced by those who made it a point of staying in contact, sharing stories, and making specific requests of me.

Set your sights on the policy you want to change and the person who can make the change happen. Perhaps the change you envision is from someone at a level I didn't describe. Perhaps your example is like some other "ones" that I admire:

- I'm inspired by the secondary teachers in Plano, Texas, who voted to increase class size to have an extra period off each day for team learning and problem solving.
- I'm inspired by Betty Dillon-Peterson, who recognized a need for an organization to serve staff developers and convinced eight male colleagues from other school systems to help her launch it.
- I'm inspired by Sue McAdams, staff development director in Rockwood, Mo., who refused to see roadblocks and instead saw multiple pathways to achieving professional development goals. She learned ultimately she could influence decision makers one conversation at a time.

- I'm inspired by Kay Psencik, who, when faced with incomprehensible accusations of her professional competence, fought to clear her name as she continued to do the work that meant a huge difference in the lives of educators and their students.
 - I am inspired by Bill Sommers, who time and time again speaks his point of view and assumes responsibility for turning around low-performing schools while at the same time telling policy makers the sacrifices that must be made to get substantive results.
 - I am inspired by progressive union leaders who push a reform agenda at the risk of losing their traditional base of support and their opportunities to lead.
- Most importantly, I look forward to being inspired by you.

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THEIR VOICES INFLUENCE. From left, Oprah Winfrey speaking at Minerva Awards this fall in California, businessman and philanthropist Bill Gates, educator Geoffrey Canada.

THOUGHT LEADERS

WHO THEY ARE, WHY THEY MATTER, AND HOW TO REACH THEM

By Hayes Mizell

A thought leader is a person or group of people espousing ideas that influence the thinking and actions of many others. National media have recently featured some prominent thought leaders in education. Davis Guggenheim’s documentary “Waiting for Superman” and the related coverage of education included panels, specials, and talk show interviews. It’s not surprising to see Michelle Rhee or Geoffrey Canada speaking with passion about what needs to happen in education — this is their field of expertise. But when Bill Gates and Oprah Winfrey focus their attention on education, they reach a wider audience.

One of Learning Forward’s strategic priorities is to engage thought leaders. The organization’s rationale for this

priority is that “educators are influenced by individuals and organizations with whom they have ongoing and trusting relationships.”

Therefore, Learning Forward chose to strategically engage individuals and organizations to advance the organization’s purpose.

The goal of this strategic priority is that, by 2012, an increasing number of members will report that individuals and organizations they view as professional development thought leaders are communicating messages consistent with Learning Forward’s purpose.

Reaching out to thought leaders is not a strategy solely for media giants or organizations such as Learning Forward. Any group or individual working to disseminate information or change the status quo — whether in professional development, education in general, or society at large — can employ this means of spreading a message.

WHO ARE THOUGHT LEADERS?

People often become thought leaders when they serve in local, state, or federal government. Certainly they are treated as thought leaders because of the power they are presumed to possess. Everyone wants to reach elected and appointed officials to help them shape messages and opinions and to leverage their influence.

State and local thought leaders are in positions of authority, have platforms to share their views, and take positions on public policy issues. In terms of seeking an audience with a policy maker, turning to state or local leaders makes sense. Many people know or have personal relationships with thought leaders at this level.

Many policy makers at the state level have the potential to impact professional development. Elected or appointed state-level officials, including governors, state legislators, state school board members, and the state superintendent, will to a greater or lesser extent need to take a position on professional development. Meanwhile, state teachers, principals, or superintendents of the year certainly have influence and, for a short time, will be in the media spotlight. State education organization leaders or executives, including union officials, are also important decision makers.

At the local level, leading influencers include mayors or county commissioners and city council members. Within the school system, thought leaders could be school board members, the superintendent, central office administrators, district directors of professional development, principals, teachers, and teacher association officials or union presidents.

Outside of education, leading figures at the state or local level include business executives, who increasingly are becoming involved in education, foundation leaders, advocacy organization leaders, and members of the media.

Thought leaders aren't necessarily in obvious positions of power. In education, particular active parents might function as thought leaders because of the leadership they have demonstrated in specific situations. Local or specialized bloggers might carry significant weight with a large number of readers, thanks to their

compelling messages. Local athletes or other celebrities often use their voices to influence change in causes that matter to them.

UNDERSTANDING THOUGHT LEADERS

Those who become and remain thought leaders use just a few key strategies to maintain their influence.

1. They have a compelling idea that is timely.
2. They have the ability to communicate their ideas clearly and forcefully.
3. They stay “on message” over time.
4. They have a loyal group of disciples.
5. They make frequent use of all available media.

WHY THOUGHT LEADERS SHOULD CARE ABOUT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As educators reach out to thought leaders to engage them in conversation about professional development, it is important to make the connection between their interests and effective professional development. Key considerations in making this connection include:

- Increasing student achievement is a federal, state, and local priority — everyone understands that.
- All educators participate in some form of professional development. Most thought leaders will likely understand this fact but may have an image of professional development that is not aligned with effective professional learning.
- Substantial public funds support professional learning. This alone will make professional development an interesting topic to thought leaders.
- With each new school year, educators confront greater challenges to student learning. Shifts in demographics and societal transformations give educators more to learn about.
- Educator learning + application = student learning. Making the connection between what educators learn and what students learn is critical.
- Thought leaders outside of professional learning likely have no orientation to or understanding of school-based, team-based professional development and its benefits.

LEADING THE WAY



In history

- St. Paul
- James Madison
- Abraham Lincoln
- Susan B. Anthony
- Mohandas K. Gandhi
- Pope John XXIII
- Martin Luther King Jr.
- Betty Friedan



In professional development

- Dennis Sparks
- Stephanie Hirsh
- Richard DuFour



In education

- John Dewey
- Benjamin Bloom
- John Goodlad

- They also may not have any understanding about the results of professional development.

INFLUENCING THOUGHT LEADERS

Working to leverage thought leaders for the cause of advancing professional development is important for a variety of reasons.

- There is a widespread mental model of professional development that contributes to ineffective practice.
- Many educators, policy makers, and citizens are uninformed about effective professional development.
- Spreading informed thinking about effective professional development will lead to more effective practice.

However, engaging thought leaders requires more than preparing a five-minute laser talk or dropping off a brochure. A process of deep engagement and building relationships is necessary to influence thought leaders and move them to take action.

The following are several steps for building these relationships.

Identifying thought leaders

As you identify whom to contact, consider the following questions:

- What evidence is there that the person is a thought leader?
- Whom does he or she influence, and how?
- What is his or her key compelling message? What connections do you see to professional learning?
- What else do you know about the thought leader, either personally or professionally?
- Does anyone in your circle of professionals and acquaintances have a previous relationship with the thought leader? Can the relationship be referenced in the conversation?

The venue

Establishing and maintaining a productive relationship with thought leaders could include a variety of activities throughout the year. Here are a few examples.

- Meet with them individually.
- Invite them to lunch.
- Invite them to speak at a school or district event.
- Invite them to dialogue with a group of educators at a special meeting the school or district organizes and facilitates.
- Invite them to go on a field trip to observe exemplary professional development.
- Attend related events that are important to the thought leaders and engage with them there. Show how you share mutual interests.
- Establish a regular schedule for meeting with them at least twice a year and hold fast to that schedule.

Consider any regular or annual events the school or district holds as opportunities to bring in thought leaders you might not have previously included. The more opportunities you iden-

tify to build connections between thought leaders and the school or district's interests, the better.

Plan the conversation

- What do you or your school, district, or organization want to accomplish as a result of the conversation?
- What do you want the thought leader to learn from the conversation?
- What do you want to learn from the conversation?
- What questions should you be ready to ask — and answer?

As you prepare for the conversation, keep in mind what thought leaders bring to the table. They may already have a strong commitment to another education issue. They may have established opinions about professional development based on previous experiences as a participant, or based on what they have heard from others. They may believe that professional development is a marginal issue, not at the core of improving education. They may have skepticism about the results of professional development and ask for evidence that effective professional development makes a difference for students and schools. They may need concrete examples in their own cities or districts.

Thought leaders may be ready for a deep exchange, demonstrating concern about slow progress in efforts to increase student achievement. Perhaps they are concerned about unexamined “business as usual” in education practice, including professional development. They may have concerns about the costs and benefits of school improvement initiatives.

These concerns make the thought leader a good potential partner. If a thought leader is ready to ask tough questions, he or she is likely open to meeting new allies who can help advance an issue of mutual interest. Clearly, such a person wants to identify sources of useful information and expertise.

Begin the conversation

- If possible, take two or three (no more) people to a meeting. One person should focus on engaging in the conversation and one on taking careful notes.
- Assume that professional development won't necessarily be on the leader's radar screen.
- Engage thought leaders in conversation that stimulates their thinking, causing them to reflect and realize what they don't know. Most importantly, help thought leaders realize how professional development relates to their interests or responsibilities.
- Before you leave, be sure that the thought leader realizes you are an important potential ally and source of expertise. Your compelling message will help the leader connect your name and face with an important issue — professional development.

Ask rather than tell

Find out where the thought leader stands on your key issue

to identify possible mutual interests or problems.

Example: “We’re meeting with leaders to learn more about their perspectives on professional development. By professional development, we mean structured learning experiences intended to improve the performance of educators currently employed by school systems. Can you share with us some of your views and impressions about the professional development of public school educators?”

Listen carefully

- Go with the flow in your conversation. Be flexible about where the conversation goes.
- Be alert to identifying the “seam” between the thought leader’s interests and the interests of your school, district, or organization.

- Don’t be pushy, but take advantage of openings in the conversation such as the thought leader’s statements of interest, problems, questions or suggestions. Don’t miss an invitation to clearly state your point of view.
- Keep the conversation moving. You may need to provide openings of your own with questions, problems, and statements of need.

Focus on their interest

You might be able to predict some of the thought leader’s major concerns. Be prepared to respond to those concerns during your first conversation.

Example: “Yes, we agree that making time in the school day for more intensive, sustained professional development can be a problem. However, there is a lot of experience and informa-

tion about how to make time available. How can we work together to inform schools about the possibilities? How can we collaborate to advocate for the state or school district to provide permission, incentives, and technical assistance that encourages schools to make more time for professional development, and use that time effectively?”

Focus on results

Even as you are probing for the thought leader’s perspectives, make clear your focus on the connection between adult learning and student achievement.

Example: “Educators are facing so many challenges in their schools and classrooms. They need as much help as they can get to increase student achievement. What are your thoughts about the effectiveness of this state’s or school district’s professional development in helping our educators perform at higher levels?”

Focus on value

Almost any thought leader will care about the money involved in funding professional development. Make clear your interest in ensuring that professional development is a wise investment.

Example: “We want to understand more about the rela-

tionship between the state’s or school district’s funding of professional development and its impact on educators’ performance. Can you tell us the total the state or school district spent, from all sources, for all types of K-12 professional development during the past year? Can you share with us evaluations of how this money was used and the results?”

Focus on exemplars

Ground your compelling ideas about effective professional development in research and examples that any thought leader can comprehend.

Example: “There is a lot of research and experience about professional development that is effective in improving teacher and student performance. Would you like some information about these practices? Would you like to know about school districts and schools in this state that are successfully implementing such practices? Are you satisfied that our state or school district is using professional development practices that have the greatest potential to improve the performance of educators and students?”

Focus on next steps

When it appears the conversation is about to conclude, shift

the discussion to the specifics of follow-up. Identify one or more of the thought leader's major interests. Offer a suggestion of what you will do next, such as schedule another meeting, send a letter, share a publication, or organize a field trip. Clarify what the thought leader has either agreed to do or can do to follow up, such as meet again, obtain information, intervene in a specific way, or otherwise take action.

However you end the conversation, be sure to make a concrete commitment and try to get a concrete commitment.

After the conversation

If you had a partner or two with you during the conversation, debrief as soon as possible. Talk about what you learned about the thought leader — what was his or her level of receptivity, interests, expertise, knowledge and experience gaps, misunderstanding and insights? Consider what new information you have. Assess together the potential to further engage and influence the thought leader.

Most importantly, what do you need to do to follow up? Write a thank-you letter to the thought leader and refer to specific high points in your conversation. Be sure to reaffirm commitments you both made to one another. One valuable resource to share, either in person or after the meeting, is Learning Forward's *Why Professional Development Matters* (Learning Forward,

2010). This free booklet, written for parents, community members, and policy makers, explains in fundamental terms what professional development is and why it is an important school improvement strategy. (Download a copy at www.learningforward.org/advancing/whypdmatters.cfm.)

For your own notes, create a more detailed accounting of the conversation, including agreements for next steps. Add the thought leader to any mailing lists that might be appropriate.

Your final step for this conversation will be to think about your next conversation. Whom else do you need to contact? What will you do differently? What outcomes do you expect? As you continue this process, carefully assess your efforts.

LEVERAGE INFLUENCE FOR PROGRESS

Those leaders whose voices carry weight and attract followers have the power to change outcomes. Having the ability to leverage that power is an important strategy in seeking change in education. When thought leaders, both within and beyond education, understand professional development and its importance, they can become a force for more effective professional learning.

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CIRCLES *of* LEADERSHIP

**OREGON DISTRICT REDEFINES COACHING ROLES TO FIND
A BALANCE BETWEEN SCHOOL AND DISTRICT GOALS**

By Amy D. Petti

I was sitting cross-legged, sticky notes and pen in hand, leaning in to listen to the instructional coach whisper to the classroom teacher as her students assembled on the rug. Along with the teacher, coach, 20 kindergarteners, and me were six observers — pairs of principals and coaches, an administrative intern, and a visiting teacher. I was coaching the coach, and the coach was coaching the teacher in the presence of these observers. We were learning with the teacher and her students. We were collaborating in practice, observing the teacher during instruction. Listening and anticipating our turn to teach or coach, we'd immediately practice the writing conference she modeled in triads of principal, coach, and student.

As director of improvement for North Clackamas School District in Milwaukie, Ore., near Portland, my role of coaching the coach was new, and the coaches welcomed the immediate feedback. Before class started, the coach met with us to set the context and purpose. We'd observe the teacher's minilesson and a student writing conference, then triads would practice a writing conference with a student. Students looked forward to their guest teachers practicing their teaching. This experience, called a lab site, culminated four years of redefining the roles of site-based coach, principal, and central office staff. We achieved a balance between district initiatives — the goal was to implement writing workshops — and site-based professional learning.

In our district, we started by exploring literacy coaching as professional development and expanded our efforts to transform the leadership landscape to include teachers, instructional coaches, principals, and central office staff collaborating in practice.

This redefinition of roles and collaboration during instruction penetrated the “core technology” of teaching — what happens between teachers and students in the

classroom (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009; Bodilly, 1998; Garmston & Wellman, 1999).

Throughout our improvement effort, we learned to:

- Build capacity from the top down, middle out, and bottom up;
- Invest in the professional development of professional developers;
- Align professional development of coaches and principals; and
- Affect instruction, beyond common planning and assessment.

We are the sixth-largest district in the state, serving more than 17,000 students. Our coaching model became the cornerstone of a five-year instructional improvement and professional development plan. We believed teachers would best improve by collaborating with other effective teachers, or coaches.

GETTING STARTED

We'd dabbled in collaborative planning and developing common assessments, we'd observed teachers, but five years ago, no one ventured into another teacher's classroom to participate in her practice. Our students' reading and writing performance was unacceptable, especially English language learners and those with disabilities.

Based on district data, we knew:

1. There was no consistency in reading instruction, lesson architecture, time spent in reading instruction or practice, and use of curriculum or assessment; and
2. Our district was moving forward with Oregon's Response to Intervention (RTI) Initiative based on effective core instruction, assessment, progress monitoring, and support for students who struggled in reading.

In order to comply with RTI, we needed a core reading program. A core program was either a common philosophy with strategies and methods for teaching reading or a common reading curriculum. Our district had neither.

Survey and observation data indicated teachers were in charge of determining all aspects of instruction in their classrooms. Teachers within the same school were not consistent in their decisions about instruction. Yet we were at a confluence of state and federal mandates to be more consistent, especially with assessment and core curriculum.

In previous years, the central office initiated improvement strategies, then disseminated them to principals to implement. We had not yet implemented any type of monitoring with walk-throughs, learning walks, or rounds. Our principals shouldered the burden of implementation, often experiencing tension between district initiatives and site-based decision making and culture. Our data indicated teachers were sole practitioners and chief instructional decision makers.

Our new central office goal for literacy was to become both consistent and creative. Principals and coaches were expected to ensure consistency with curriculum and assessment and encourage creativity in best practices for student engagement. DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Karhanek (2004) and DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many (2006) describe this dilemma as tight/loose in professional learning communities. I prefer the terms consistent/creative, as tight/loose conjures up visions of a noose. This quandary is best addressed with teams of leadership at school sites. Our teams began with principals and coaches and grew to include teacher leaders.

BUILDING CAPACITY

I met our six literacy coaches for the first time two weeks before school was out for the summer, the day after I was told I was moving to the central office from being a principal. My new job was to lead professional development in reading for coaches and principals and align the reading program to state standards. We were also considering selecting new reading materials.

As I participated in this journey, I found that I needed to build capacity for myself in the shift from leading a building to leading from central office. During the summer, I invested in my own professional development, building capacity from the top down. I read research about coaching, revisited NSDC's Standards for Staff Development, reviewed my dissertation on teacher learning, and networked via e-mail with colleagues about coaching.

The initial plan for building capacity districtwide was to develop learning communities of coaches and principals; use data to make research-based decisions; and collaborate to improve content knowledge in reading and coaching. We also brought together several high-performing teachers to study the current reading program and student performance data. We simultaneously built capacity from the *top down* (principals and central office staff), the *middle out* (coaches), and the *bottom up* (teachers).

Principals and central office staff participated in bimonthly professional development meetings. Coaches met monthly. Our professional development centered on analyzing student reading data and exploring reading content, assessment, and instruction. After three years, we shifted our coaching and learning emphases more to writing. We were able to improve student achievement in literacy by improving teacher and principal literacy knowledge.

FROM ISOLATION TO CONSISTENCY

As we began, we encountered a major challenge when the reading alignment committee of 40 teachers, coaches,



Amy D. Petti

specialists, and principals made three recommendations: implement at least 90 minutes of reading instruction each day; adopt a new core program; and implement a common reading assessment. These three recommendations were in stark contrast to the current practice of each teacher making independent decisions about instruction. The highly successful teachers from the reading committee were adamant about these recommendations.

Half the elementary principals did not believe their teachers would implement 90 minutes for reading with a core program and a common assessment.

North Clackamas School District

Milwaukie, Ore.

Number of schools: **32**

Enrollment: **17,508**

Staff: **2,126**

Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	72%
Black:	3%
Hispanic:	13%
Asian/Pacific Islander:	8%
Native American:	2%
Other:	2%

Limited English proficient: **13%**

Languages spoken: **64**

Free/reduced lunch: **35%**

Special education: **12%**

Contact: **Tim Mills**, superintendent

E-mail: mills@nclack.k12.or.us

The other half believed the teachers could and should. We were a house divided. For three months, principals were engaged in reading professional development for 90 minutes at each meeting. At the end of the nine hours of professional development, the principals agreed to endorse all three recommendations.

With these agreements, coaches shifted their focus from building relationships to learning a new reading program, as they were responsible for the on-site professional development for the program. Every principal

wanted coaches for onsite professional development, but the district couldn't afford to fund this request. We increased coaching positions with one for every Title I school and a single shared coach for the non-Title I schools, funded by Title II. The entire K-6 district would implement a common core reading curriculum. The leadership challenge was to bring all schools from compliance to commitment.

LEARNING FOR ALL

Coaches, teacher leaders, and administrators participated in professional development on the new reading program. The first training in the summer was not enough learning time, so coaches designed multiple voluntary summer workshops. Principals participated in additional training to increase their confidence in reading content and strategies embedded in the program. City et al. (2009) agrees training administrators without their subordinates is effective initial professional development, since they can be reluctant to take risks or raise questions in front of teachers they evaluate.

Every teacher went home for the summer with a teacher's guide to the new reading program and an opportunity to participate in summer workshops using the new reading materials. More than 100 teachers (30% of our teachers) participated in

these coach-led workshops, allowing teachers to collaborate with coaches before implementing the reading program. Coach/teacher leader pairs designed August half-day mandatory trainings for every teacher.

Each successive year, coaches and principals collaborated with more precision. Learning walks, collaborative planning, and common lesson architecture became more common. Yet at this point, coach-teacher collaboration around instruction remained rare. We continued to provide on-site coaching, summer workshops, and book studies enhancing teacher learning.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPERS

We invested in the coaches' professional development, enhancing capacity from the middle out. Throughout the five years, book studies for coaches, curriculum development and support, and sharing coaching strategies became common coaching practices. Coaches' monthly full-day professional development meetings and two-day retreat included more than 80 hours of professional development and supported three goals:

- Implement the district's continuous improvement plan around literacy and the implementation of RTI;
- Increase our professional knowledge and skills around coaching; and
- Ensure consistent communication across the schools.

We identified strong classroom teachers willing to work with coaches. These partnerships usually featured coaches demonstrating in the cooperating teacher's classroom or teachers allowing coaches to observe. This one-to-one coaching built trust. Coaches and teachers began to plan together. Coaching meetings expanded to include special education and English language development leaders.

Coaches were breaking down barriers and collaborating in the act of co-teaching and planning with successful teachers. What began as a model where coaches were perceived as experts who worked with struggling teachers (a misconception that persisted throughout our first year) evolved to a partnership model (Knight, 2007). Coaches participated in a book study of Knight's book, *Instructional Coaching*, and three of us attended Columbia University Teachers College Coaching Institute. At the institute, we participated in a lab site, where the classroom became an engaging learning environment for everyone involved — teachers, students, coaches, and administrators. The experience was transformational. We had to bring this robust collaboration during instruction to our district. We chose to combine the best of Knight's work with the Teachers College coaching lab site model to fit our district's and schools' culture and goals.

ALIGN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF COACHES AND PRINCIPALS

At central office, my role shifted toward aligning coach and principal professional development. I frequently reminded

STUDENT PERFORMANCE RESULTS 2008-09

Reading scores	State Percent meet or exceed	District Percent meet or exceed 35% poverty	Clackamas Elementary (Title I) 75% poverty	Campbell Elementary (Title I) 44% poverty
Grade 3	83%	85%	More than 95%	93%
Grade 4	84%	86%	92%	95%
Grade 5	77%	81%	82%	83%
Grade 6	77%	83%	71%	85%

Since the implementation of coaching and lab sites, the district consistently outperforms the state averages in reading and math. The two elementary schools using lab sites most consistently outperform the district averages as well. (Clackamas' success at grade 3 includes more than 95% meeting or exceeding in math as well.)

coaches not to get ahead of their principals. Coaches were natural initiators, and they needed to align in practice with their principals or communication became strained. At the central office, we changed thinking and roles to envision coaches and principals learning in the same room. This was by no means natural for many and required a lot of trust between coaches and principals. At the beginning of the fourth year, we brought all principals and coaches together for a three-day workshop on instructional coaching led by Jim Knight. It was no small task to corral principals and their coaches for three days. It proved to be the tipping point for collaboration among coaches and principals. As a result, the job title of literacy coach shifted to instructional coach, as coaching became transferrable to other subjects. If I could start over, I would have included principals and coaches earlier and more often in shared professional development. The principal's role is too complex and demanding to do it alone. Principals viewed their coach as an ally, and all saw the coach as essential for site-based learning. Coach/principal teams eventually communicated and balanced district initiatives and school-based learning.

COMMITMENT TO ONGOING IMPROVEMENT

It took four years for all these professional development efforts to penetrate classrooms with a lab site model. Coaches successfully co-taught and worked one-on-one with teachers. We conducted learning walks and observed instruction. We implemented common planning and assessment. But the lab site brought teachers, coaches, and principals into effective teachers' rooms to learn and practice together, raising the quality of instruction for all participants. See chart above.

Coaches were fully funded from Title I and Title II funds. During the unprecedented 2009 budget reductions, we asked principals: "What one expenditure must stay, even at the ex-

pense of other programs?" Their unanimous response was "coaching positions." Retaining coaches was principals' No. 1 priority after four years. Principals and coaches improved teacher performance and student achievement. That sunlit morning in kindergarten, our district demonstrated commitment to remaining in practice — teachers, coaches, principals, and central office invested in improving student learning through teachers' practice.

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Photo by ANNETTE HOLMSTROM

Bjorn Burke works with paper strips and a white board in Karen Vaver's class at University Place Primary School.

DISTRICT FINDS THE RIGHT EQUATION TO IMPROVE MATH INSTRUCTION

By Annette Holmstrom

Just months after implementing new instructional strategies for teaching math to her 2nd-grade students, Karen Vaver noted a significant difference in student achievement. “Our textbook has one lesson on adding with 8 or 9. Kids usually have trouble here, and typically only a handful of students get it. This year, it’s a total flip-flop — only a handful of students don’t have it yet.”

After implementing new strategies to help students learn fractions concepts, 4th-grade teacher Lori Moore remarked, “I’ve never seen this high of a rate of success. And the looks on their faces when they get it? Wow. Many of these students have never earned 100% on a math test.”

Teachers learned the instructional strategies to which they credit such turnarounds when they participated in a comprehensive, evidence-based professional development initiative that came to life in response to one school dis-

trict’s need to “fix” the math problem. The math problem is common to most U.S. school districts, and education leaders are well aware that U.S. math achievement lags far behind many other countries in the world (Mullis, Martin, & Foy, 2008).

University Place (Wash.) School District Superintendent Patti Banks found the conspicuous income gap for math scores even more disturbing. In her school district, only 23% of low-income 10th-grade students passed the state math test in 2008. All students will be required to pass this test beginning with the graduating class of 2014 in order to earn a diploma.

Pervasive evidence linking low-income students to low math scores can be found throughout U.S. school systems, despite the curriculum wars roiling the world of math instruction in attempts to address the problem.

Superintendent Banks challenged her administrative team to make increasing math achievement for low-income students a top priority and approved the redirection of sig-

nificant district resources to the task. Banks urged her colleagues to “transfer the external sense of urgency created by the accountability movement to an internal, culture-driven sense of urgency born out of a sense of calling, missionary zeal, and professionalism” in order to guarantee that each student received a world-class mathematics education.

In the University Place School District Department of Teaching and Learning, three interrelated spheres of influence met to put a plan into action:

- *Professional development*, represented by me. I believed that implementation of evidence-based best practices for effective instruction, as well as high-quality job-embedded professional learning structures, inevitably led to student achievement gains.
- *Math*, represented by Jeff Loupas, director of mathematics, assessment, and technology. Loupas disagreed, insisting it was all about the math.
- *Administration*, represented by Andrew Eyres, executive director of teaching and learning. Eyres pointed out that, without administrative support, it mattered little who was right: The plan was doomed to fail.

It turns out all three of us were right.

As a result of our initial efforts and with the support of a U.S. Department of Education math-science partnership grant, the University Place School District now leads the Math: Getting It Project, a multilayered, ongoing mathematics initiative involving three local school districts and a local university. Components of the initiative include summer math institutes, teacher leader learning, targeted curriculum and assessment work, and professional learning communities focused on math instruction as well as administrator training and support.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

All components of the program were designed to align with NSDC’s Standards for Staff Development and reflect Richard Elmore’s consensus view of what effective professional learning must look like (Elmore, 2002). See the box above right.

Professional development included intensive summer institutes for grades K-12 teachers taught by in-district teacher leaders, designed to help teachers implement evidence-based, math-specific instructional strategies and increase math content knowledge and pedagogy. But summer institutes weren’t the beginning and end of our learning.

Teacher leaders and professional learning communities

Research shows that the impact of professional learning activities on classroom practice is inversely related to how far away those activities are from the classroom itself (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). In order to link summer institute learning

CRITERIA FOR EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Effective professional development:

- Focuses on a well-articulated mission or purpose anchored in student learning.
- Derives from analysis of student learning of specific content in a specific setting.
- Focuses on specific issues of curriculum and pedagogy.
- Derives from research and exemplary practice.
- Connects with specific issues of instruction and student learning in the context of actual classrooms.
- Embodies a clearly articulated theory or model of adult learning.
- Develops, reinforces, and sustains group work.
- Involves active participation of school leaders and staff.
- Provides sustained focus over time and continuous improvement.
- Provides models of effective practice.
- Utilizes assessment and evaluation.
- Provides timely feedback on teacher learning and practice.

Source: Elmore, 2002.

to classroom practice, teacher leaders facilitated building-based, grade-level professional learning communities that met regularly to work collaboratively on implementation of new instructional strategies, analyze changing student achievement data, design powerful formative assessment strategies to guide instruction, and plan support for struggling students. During the school year, teacher leaders participated in learning to help them develop necessary skills to build highly functioning professional learning communities, as defined in the Math: Getting It Project learning community rubric. That rubric is summarized in the box on p. 60.

The professional learning community rubric kept teachers and administrators focused on the three crucial questions that should drive the work of those within a professional learning community, according to Richard DuFour (2004):

- What do we want each student to learn?
- How will we know when each student has learned it?
- How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?

Curriculum and assessment work

Once teacher leaders and their teams began to meet, teachers quickly spoke about their need for support on two

fronts. First, leaders and their teams asked for help integrating new instructional strategies with existing curriculum. They also asked for assistance designing classroom formative assessments to inform math instruction and enrich their discussions.

So grade-level leaders then convened to align and revise curriculum maps as well as design formative assessments, which were then shared with teachers districtwide through the learning community structure and on the web site.

These work sessions, while guided by Department of Teaching and Learning staff, stayed grounded in classroom practice. If it didn't work in the classroom, teachers reported it. Continuous improvement and refinement of curriculum and assessments continues as part of the professional learning community and work team cycle.

MATHEMATICS

Yet what about that math? What was the missing ingredient, according to Loupas, our math expert? Within mathematics education, a body of research clearly points to certain instructional strategies specific to teaching math content that prove far more effective than traditional strategies, especially for struggling math students. Math-specific strategies complement what we know

about effective instructional strategies generally, yet have content-specific elements found only in math instruction.

The bedrock instructional principle underlying math strategies involves the explicit teaching of referential, hands-on manipulative models as part of regular math instruction. For example:

- When learning fractions operations concepts, students use fraction circles, paper strips, folding paper, and two-sided color chips. More than 30 years of convincing evidence from the University of Minnesota's Rational Number Project (Cramer, Post, & delMas, 2002) clearly points to the effectiveness of these content-specific strategies.
- When students first develop number sense and learn to perform whole-number operations, they use ten-frames, hundreds charts, paper strips, place value mats, and base ten blocks to develop a deep understanding of place value. Place value models help students successfully learn addition, subtraction, multiplication, and fraction concepts, and reinforce foundational math concepts necessary for understanding algebraic concepts later on.

While many elementary math teachers use math manipulatives such as these for instruction, the math models in the Math: Getting It Project are different. First, teachers use only those models most strongly connected to significant increases in student math achievement. These models also differ from traditional approaches because students incorporate powerful referential models to their mathematics academic background knowledge as they learn them.

For example, these models implicitly provide students with foundational math understanding of how and why the algorithm for multiplying fractions works, while simple memorization of the algorithm, a common student fallback strategy, does not. The old adage "Mine is not to reason why; just invert and multiply" will not lead students to deeper understanding of the crucial hows and whys of math, while referential math models inevitably do.

Most importantly, students will be able to reference these models later to remember, relearn, practice, and expand their math skills as they increase mathematical competency. Loupas explains, "These models will never need to be abandoned, as many traditional math learning strategies are. Without these models, many students can't make the leap from additive thinking to fractions concepts. They don't understand ideas such as why on-half plus one-third doesn't equal one-fifth. Our most at-risk students can't afford to learn strategies that will confuse them later on. Kids who need our help the most need to see that math makes sense. It makes sense when students learn with referential math models."

ADMINISTRATOR INVOLVEMENT

Administrators also play an important role in the district's math reform efforts. "Without the support of the superintendent

5 ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

Shared mission: The professional learning community demonstrates a high degree of commitment to continuously improve student math achievement, agreement on best practices for math instruction, eagerness to implement best practices, and commitment to collaboratively improve math instruction through the learning community structure.

Learning-focused collaboration: The professional learning community collaboratively shares ideas and strategies, plans learning and teaching activities, and works together to solve problems.

Collective inquiry: The professional learning community confidently uses a wide range of methods to investigate learning and teaching, using findings to inform and develop its practice. The community collects, analyzes, and uses data to support this process.

Action research: The professional learning community seeks to improve instructional practices for teaching mathematics and works collaboratively with others to improve instruction. Effects on student learning are the primary basis for assessing improvement strategies, and members constantly turn their learning and insights into action, rigorously assessing their efforts, demanding evidence in the form of student learning.

Results orientation: The professional learning community evaluates efforts based on tangible results, and stays hungry for evidence of student learning. Members continuously use this evidence to inform and improve their practice.

Source: Math: Getting It Project web site, www.upsd.wednet.edu/1613101012143043530/site/default.asp.

ent and building principals, we would find it very difficult to reinforce and support these changes,” says Eyres. “With this support, teachers are making significant changes in their practice, even teachers who have been teaching math the same way most of their careers.”

Administrators are better supporters of math teachers because they engaged in professional learning time studying math as well. Eyres says, “In administrator professional learning communities, University Place School District leaders spent significant time learning mathematics and math-specific pedagogical concepts because many administrators have some uneasiness with math, as some teachers do as well. When administrators knew what to expect in classrooms, they also knew how to help teachers develop necessary new skills that work to teach kids math.”

Eyres and other district administrators continuously conducted classroom walk-throughs to gather data and track implementation for grant purposes, and used the opportunity to encourage administrative dialogue and study around support for effective instruction. Principals promoted learning by participating in lesson studies with professional learning communities, facilitating preplanning and debriefing sessions around focused topics for improving instruction.

And what about low-income students, headed for a looming graduation requirement they may not be able to meet? For University Place School District math learners, things are changing quickly. Historically, the math achievement gap between low-income and other students widens in middle school; low-income students regress even further as math content demands increase. In 2009-10, however, state testing data shows that 7th graders closed this gap by 10% as they moved from 6th to 7th grade, an unprecedented turnaround that Superintendent Banks characterized as “significant, meaningful progress.”

LOW-INCOME STUDENTS

Newly implemented strategies have had a particularly dramatic impact on University Place students in the middle school Learning Assistance Program, where, in 2009, 63% of students received free and reduced lunches, as opposed to 37% in the general population. Learning Assistance Program students, who entered the program based on low math achievement scores, began quickly testing out of the remediation program. In 2009,

almost one-quarter of the program’s math students exited the intervention program first semester because of improved math achievement.

Laura Sloan, intermediate-level math specialist, credits the turnaround to new instructional models and better teaching. “Our low-income kids don’t come in with the same background experiences our more privileged kids do,” she says. “Money for low-income children may be welfare checks and check-cashing stores, for instance, not budgets and bank accounts, so poorer students come in already behind in real-world understanding of mathematics. These instructional models level the playing field between rich and poor by providing referential math knowledge that is very real to kids in the here and now. These models also provide powerful support for future math learning.”

In Sloan’s view, what has been the impact of her district’s professional development in math so far? “It is very obvious to me the teachers who have gone through the professional development and those who have not,” she says. “Trained teachers have changed the way they teach kids. They aren’t satisfied with just the ‘how’ and don’t go straight to teaching the algorithm without making sure students understanding the ‘why’ behind a math procedure. It is making a significant positive difference for our students.”

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University Place School District

University Place, Wash.

Number of schools: **8**

Enrollment: **5,632**

Staff: **307**

Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	62.6%
Black:	16.4%
Hispanic:	6.6%
Asian/Pacific Islander:	13.3%
Native American:	1.1%
Other:	0%

Limited English proficient: **2.1%**

Languages spoken: **18**

Free/reduced lunch: **34.2%**

Special education: **12.1%**

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E-mail: **jloupas@upsd.wednet.edu**

ASSUMPTIONS

ABOUT COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, POLICIES, AND MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING/AGREEMENT

Learning Forward recently released *Advancing High-Quality Professional Learning Through Collective Bargaining and State Policy*. Developed in partnership with the National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, and Council of Chief State School Officers, the report explores how states and districts can support high-quality professional learning while calling for more collaboration and a common set of standards for developing policy.

Use this survey to collect perceptions about various forms of policies as they relate to professional development. Follow up with group dialogue, and use the report to inform team members' understandings and perspectives. The report is available online at www.learningforward.org/news/advancinghighqualityprofessionallearning.pdf.

Note: Here, the term "policy" is used to describe the broader category of formal agreements between a school board and its employees and the state and educational agencies and educators.



To what extent do you agree? Please indicate your level of agreement. Be prepared to explain your rationale.

1. State policy has little influence on district and school practices.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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2. Collective bargaining agreements or memoranda of understanding increase the quality of professional learning more than state policies.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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3. Individual teacher professional development plans ensure that teachers are engaged in effective professional learning.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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4. Engaging teachers and principals in decisions about professional development increases the impact of the professional learning on student learning.



5. High-quality mentoring and induction programs accelerate new teachers' effectiveness and satisfaction.



6. State investment in rigorous licensure systems and high-quality induction programs benefits students.



7. Ensuring educators have effective professional development is a district responsibility, not a state responsibility.



8. Effective professional development is tied directly to individual teacher needs.



9. Teacher retention increases when teachers are supported with ongoing career development and differentiated roles.



10. Providing time for professional learning within the contract day increases the quality of the professional learning.



11. Current relicensure requirements ensure teachers gain the knowledge and skills necessary to improve their practice and student learning.



12. Policies about compensation for professional development improve teachers' commitment to continuous improvement.





Guerra



Nelson

Stay calm and detached, but be clear in response to racist remarks

By Laura Ihonvbere

THE FIRST TIME an educator speaks out against a racist remark in the school setting is often the most difficult, particularly when the comment is made by an adult the educator does not know. When the remark surfaces, it often takes a few seconds to recover from the shock of hearing such a disturbing comment in a place regarded as safe and supportive of children. In these long, agonizing seconds, the educator contemplates whether to speak out or let the comment pass. Speaking out might result in an ugly backlash, but silence condones the remark. If no one else heard the comment, it would be easy to ignore.

But would it? Without a culturally proficient lens, this might be true. In fact, the educator without a culturally proficient lens might not give the comment a second thought. But a culturally proficient educator faces a moral dilemma — do what's right or do what's easy? In other words, can the educator overcome apprehension of confrontation and respond to this racist remark? Realizing her failure to act may haunt her conscience for a long time to come, the educator transcends her fear and decides to speak out.

In the reflection at right, Laura Ihonvbere, a first-year middle school assistant principal and a graduate student in our educational leadership program, describes a similar situation and her response. This column is the first of several co-written with graduate students working in the field with a culturally proficient, social justice lens developed by the education and community leadership masters program at Texas State University-San Marcos.

— Patricia L. Guerra and Sarah W. Nelson

In each issue of *JSD*, Patricia L. Guerra and Sarah W. Nelson 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.learningforward.org.

I had a father come in one afternoon to talk about a problem on the bus with his daughter. He had a thick accent. Although I didn't ask, it would be my best guess that he was from somewhere in South America. He told me that a girl on the bus had verbally threatened his daughter with physical violence. She told his daughter she was going to beat her up. He described his daughter as a quiet girl who never got in trouble. He described the student that threatened her as "an African-American girl." Neither he nor his daughter knew the girl's name. As we talked through the problem, he expressed concern for his daughter's safety as any parent would. I told him that we had video cameras on the buses and that I would call transportation, view the video, and hopefully discover the identity of the girl. I assured him we were equally concerned about the safety of our students and I would investigate the situation to the best of my ability. I also suggested that since the end of the school day was 10 minutes away, he might want to take his daughter home for the day so I would have the next day to complete my investigation and take action if necessary.

He seemed satisfied with the outcome of our discussion and rose to leave my office. I shook his hand and promised to call him the next day to follow up with him. As he turned to

leave, he said, “I appreciate your help. You know how those people can be.” Unsure what people he was referring to, I said that adolescents are indeed full of emotion and sometimes difficult to deal with. He replied, “No, I mean blacks. They think they can do whatever they want to people.” After closing my mouth, which had probably dropped open at this point, I disagreed and said, “Inappropriate behavior is not a quality reserved for African-American children.” I continued, “In my life, I have met people of all races who had wonderful qualities and positive attributes as well as people of all races who unfortunately did not. It is not my experience that bad behavior is limited to one group of people.” He said no

more, but gave me a look that showed he did not share my opinion and left.

I sat for a moment, a little stunned by our conversation. Later, I described the situation to my principal and confessed that I wasn’t sure if I handled it correctly. Did I say too much or too little? Our district has a goal this year to improve customer service for our parents. Did balancing this goal and my need to address a blatant example of racism cause me to handle the situation badly? A month later, I still think about this situation and am unsure. I do not believe that I was rude. In fact, I believe I did not say enough.

I will continue to address instances of racism as an administrator — it will happen again, unfortunately. I think at

a different time and place in my life, before my graduate work in cultural proficiency, I may not have even said what I did. I would not have known what or how to say anything. This is growth for me. I have been involved in other important conversations since then and feel this is something I am consistently improving and handling better. I will not berate myself about this, but take it for what it was, an opportunity for continued personal growth. I must continue to challenge deficit beliefs when I encounter them, both in my professional life and with my own children. I know that I cannot change the beliefs of others, but I cannot condone racism. ■

ALTHOUGH THIS EXPERIENCE was unsettling, Laura Ihonvbere made several valuable discoveries about herself that day. Most importantly, she demonstrated that she works with a moral imperative (Fullan, 2003). She has the courage to do what’s right regardless of personal risk. Additionally, she has the skills to effectively handle this type of encounter, and she knows that if she follows a few guidelines, speaking out does not have to result in a heated argument.

What guidelines did Ihonvbere follow?

1. She understood it was pointless to preach or argue with the parent, because she knew one interaction would not change his deeply seated beliefs. Released from this strong urge to change his beliefs, her motive for speaking out was to send a clear message that his racist remarks were not tolerated in school.
2. She listened carefully to what the parent had to say rather than dismissing his comments.
3. She stayed calm during the entire interaction, which allowed her to think quickly on her feet and disagree in as matter-of-fact manner as she could.
4. Despite the fact that Ihonvbere has a son who is biracial, she did not take the parent’s remarks personally but remained emotionally detached to prevent the interaction from escalating into a heated debate where neither side hears the other. She also avoided the use of hot-button phrases such as, “I can’t believe you just said that” or “that’s a racist comment,” so the parent did not become defensive and feel the need to retaliate. She did not use body language and facial expressions (e.g. rolling her eyes) that sent judgmental messages about the parent’s views.
5. By stating that both “inappropriate behavior” and “wonderful qualities and attributes” were found in all groups of people, Ihonvbere countered his stereotypical view.

Although this one interaction is not likely to change this parent’s beliefs, the interaction informed the parent that his view is not universally shared and that such views are unacceptable.

Speaking out against racist remarks and deficit beliefs is never easy. But as Ihonvbere discovered, the more you engage in these critical conversations, the more the fear dissipates, communication skills improve, and self-confidence builds. As a result, the more likely you are to challenge statements that demean students and families and harm the teaching and learning process. Being willing to do what is right even when it’s difficult is what it means to be a culturally proficient educator.

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— Guerra and Nelson



Steer the conversation toward — not away from — the elephant in the room

When Opal Davis Dawson was ready to investigate the reasons for her approval rating, she knew she was in for a fierce conversation, and I applaud her willingness to have the conversations that make progress possible in her school. It is devastating to see our approval ratings in black-and-white. Inviting others to engage in discussion about how we can improve takes great courage.

When I work with groups and leaders looking to tackle their tough challenges, they may need to talk about issues that no one wants to talk about. Four objectives (see p. 68) are important to embrace before they enter the conversation. I believe that Dawson and others will tackle their next “mokitā” successfully if they keep these objectives in mind.

— Susan Scott

By Opal Davis Dawson

Can you guess what the number 86 represents? This is a question I asked for two consecutive weeks in my staff newsletter, *Opal’s Gems*. I

In each issue of *JSD*, Susan Scott (susan@fiercinc.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.fiercinc.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.learningforward.org. © Copyright, Fierce Inc., 2010.

placed the number 86 on a big sign in the front office and on a bulletin board in the teachers’ lounge. I even placed the number 86 on the back of the adult restroom door! As a result, the conversation in the teachers’ lounge at times consisted of laughter, serious guessing, questions regarding my sanity, or the number of pounds I wanted to lose, how much we could earn working at a convenience store, and, of course, more laughter.

The number 86 represented the approval rating the staff gave me last year during our district’s Comprehensive School Survey. What they didn’t know was that I had just introduced them to their first lesson in “mokitās.” Mokitā is a word from New Guinea meaning something that everyone knows about but nobody talks about. We would call this “the elephant in the room.” In her *Fierce Conversations* work, Susan Scott teaches that the Papuans of New Guinea use the number of mokitās to gauge the health of a community. And I was ready to

master the courage to interrogate reality — theirs and mine.

I asked myself: What was I thinking? How could I dare tackle my most challenging issue? Why couldn’t I pretend that I had not received those results, even though they were on the district’s web site for all to see? No deal. I was ready to face hard truths and have a serious conversation with my teachers.

How on earth could 14% of my teachers think that I was not an effective leader? Surely this was just a dream — more like a nightmare. It was time to figure out what they meant by their rating. I believe that I am effective at what I do. I have been doing this for a very long time, and I hired the majority of my teachers.

I decided to take a close look at the data. The statements ranged from “My school provides a caring and supportive environment for students” to “My school provides teachers with opportunities to collaborate on lesson planning, analysis of student work, and instructional improvement” to “My



supervisor gives me adequate feedback on my job performance.” The scale ranged from 1 to 4, with 1 being the lowest and 4 the highest. The average of the three aforementioned examples was 3.8. With that total, I would think a leader would be considered effective. However, the next question shook me up. It said, “My supervisor provides effective leadership.” When I saw that 14% rated me at a 1.1 — which equated to disagree or strongly disagree — I was devastated. Seven certified staff members had this perception. I knew I really should focus on the other 86%. I must admit, however, that I immediately wanted to create an emotional wake that was felt across the entire Ohio River! I wanted to let my words and not silence do the heavy lifting. Surely this wasn’t my rating.

Helen Keller once said, “Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.” As I thought about this quote, I settled down and prepared to share the data with my teachers. They were excited about all the great successes we had experienced in the past weeks and were eager to know what the number 86 represented. Before I told them, I went through some of the other survey results. It was gratifying that they still agreed with the high responses. We talked about what systems had to be in place for a school to be successful. It was my hope that this conversation would lead them to see that “effective leadership” made it all possible.

The suspense mounted as I revealed that the number 86 represented the approval rating they gave me, the rating they thought I had earned. Now they were ready for the official work of the day. I explained the meaning of the *mokita* concept and why I shared my approval rating. I was ready to face reality.

With my ego on the floor, I forged

ahead and realized along the way that this process, while not easy for me, was going to impact our school culture in a positive way. The vulnerability that I felt has since allowed us to have conversations in an open, safe environment where I set the example of how we could all come out from behind ourselves. We entered into the conversation with candor and made it real. I learned that their perception was their reality. While I didn’t like getting an 86% approval rating, I know that I may not ever get to 100%. I found that I had been operating in my own leadership reality — some of the conversations I’d been having may have

been with myself. I had missed the fact that, for some of my teachers, the conversations had impeded the relationships.

I find this work difficult, but I know these are hard steps I must take to advance our school. Our conversations are just beginning. If we all want to gain and demonstrate the courage needed to interrogate our differing realities, we have so many more questions to ask each other.

•
Opal Davis Dawson is principal of John F. Kennedy Montessori Elementary School in Louisville, Ky. ■

4 OBJECTIVES OF A FIERCE CONVERSATION

Consider the implications when you approach conversations with the following objectives:



Interrogate reality

Understand that there are multiple, competing realities existing simultaneously about any topic imaginable. Remain curious instead of defensive, and model honesty, openness, and transparency.

Provoke learning

Go into your conversations hoping to be influenced, hoping you will be different when the conversation has ended. With that as a goal, you will likely discover that fierce conversations are a marvelous cure for excessive certitude.

Tackle tough challenges

Keep it real and avoid the buildup of undercurrent by fearlessly and skillfully bringing the issues, both spoken and unspoken, out into the open where everyone can discuss, address, and resolve them. Don’t delay. Today is the day.

Enrich relationships

Even the toughest fierce conversations enrich relationships. There is something within us that responds to those who level with us, who don’t suggest our compromises for us, who give us the purity of their attention.

SOURCE: Scott, S. (2002). *Fierce conversations: Achieving success at work & in life, one conversation at a time*. New York: Penguin.

MEMBER OPPORTUNITY

www.learningforward.org/elearning/pd360

Learning Forward has partnered with School Improvement Network to offer discounted subscriptions to PD 360, School Improvement Network's on-demand library of professional development resources.

Learning Forward members can now join the more than 500,000 educators from across North America who use PD 360 to make their professional learning experiences more effective, convenient, and sustainable. PD 360 includes hundreds of research-based videos on topics like differentiated instruction, leadership, and assessment, plus tools for follow-up, tracking, reflection, and group training.

Learning Forward members will receive access to the complete PD 360 library, as well as exclusive Learning Forward content, for \$149, more than \$100 off the usual price for an annual individual subscription.



STORY OF OUR NAME CHANGE

www.learningforward.org/about/newname.cfm

Members have heard about the new name, Learning Forward, for three months. We know that changing an identity to which so many of us have attached significance and emotion can be a long transition. If you haven't had a chance to do so already, we hope you'll take time to watch short videos from Stephanie Hirsh and Joellen Killion explaining the name change.

NETWORK LOCALLY

www.learningforward.org/about/affiliates.cfm

State and provincial affiliate organizations provide members the opportunity to expand their professional networks by connecting with other individuals nearby. More than 35 affiliates provide services and programs that connect professional developers within individual states, provinces, or regions. Find your affiliate organization's contact information or learn what it would take to start up an affiliate if one doesn't exist for your area.



FROM TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS

www.learningforward.org/news/t3

Explore a key aspect of Learning Forward's definition of high-quality professional learning in "Collective responsibility makes all teachers the best" in the September issue of *Teachers Teaching Teachers*. Executive director Stephanie Hirsh writes that deeper understanding of and commitment to collective responsibility for student success can prepare a school to answer parents' concerns about teacher quality while enlisting parental advocates for collaborative professional learning.

INTENTIONAL ADULT LEARNING

www.learningforward.org/learningblog

Shirley Hord writes:

"The school, as we all know, is the site for student learning. That's the reason we have schools. We may engage in substantial discourse about what students are to learn, how they are to learn it, and when, but student learning remains the ultimate goal.

"We also know that the most significant factor in whether students learn is teaching quality. Not just teacher quality, but teaching quality. If teaching quality is the most important influence on student learning, how do we maintain, enhance, or improve teaching quality? The answer is continuous professional learning. And the most powerful setting or environment for continuous professional learning is the community of professional learners.

"Our next vital question is, what should we deliberately learn?"

Read Hord's post to explore and respond to her thoughts on the question of how teachers determine what to learn in their quest to better teach students.



Shirley Hord

The federal policy landscape:

A look at how legislation affects professional development.

By M. René Islas

Specific elements in federal laws have the potential to impact practices at state and local levels. Professional development's definition and importance in federal legislation, particularly the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, has evolved over the last couple of decades.

Key points in Learning Forward's definition of professional development.

Learning Forward described high-quality professional development in detail to influence the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Research from within and beyond education supports the specific strategies and elements of the definition.

The view inside the beltway:

Seattle teacher trades in her chalk for a chance to be a legislative fellow.

By Kristina Peterson

Working as an aide to the House of Representatives requires a different set of skills than teaching 5th grade, as one teacher learned. Her experience during a time when policy makers are focusing intently on teacher quality helped her understand the legislative process and the importance of teachers' voices in shaping policy.

Business teachers go to work and students get the dividends.

By GERALYN E. STEPHENS

The Carl D. Perkins Technical and Career Education Act required changes to the professional learning business education teachers experience. Teacher internships are one powerful strategy for more sustained learning that brings benefits to both educators and their students.

Alberta unites on teaching quality.

By Tracy Crow

Standards outlining teaching quality are the key policy guidelines affecting professional learning in Alberta. A committed collaboration among all of the province's education stakeholder groups resulted in a set of essential conditions that ensure effective implementation of education initiatives.

Policy across the pond:

British researcher talks about professional learning's impact in the United Kingdom and beyond.

By Louise Stoll, as told to Tracy Crow

Just as in the U.S., political changes in the United Kingdom and other nations affect education policy. School leaders in the U.K. have significant autonomy to shape school improvement and are increasingly turning to collaborations with other schools to spread best practices among schools.

The power of one, revisited:

Inspiring examples remind us we can all find ways to make a difference.

By Stephanie Hirsh

One person with passion and a commitment to action can make a difference. Three state-level education leaders worked within their bureaucratic contexts to significantly impact professional learning policy. Any committed educator can use specific strategies to make a difference.

Thought leaders:

Who they are, why they matter, and how to reach them.

By Hayes Mizell

Meaningfully engaging with those leaders who have the power to influence others has the potential to spread an important message widely. Educators can follow several steps to identify appropriate thought leaders, plan effective conversations, find common ground, and establish ongoing relationships.

call for articles

Theme: Learning designs

Manuscript deadline: Feb. 15, 2011

Issue: October 2011

Theme: Resources for professional learning

Manuscript deadline: April 15, 2011

Issue: December 2011

- Please send manuscripts and questions to Tracy Crow (tracy.crow@learningforward.org).
- Notes to assist authors in preparing a manuscript are at www.learningforward.org/news/jsd/guidelines.cfm.

columns

Collaborative culture:

Steer the conversation toward — not away from — the elephant in the room.
By Susan Scott and Opal Davis Dawson

A principal asked her staff to join her in interrogating her reality to become a more effective leader.

Cultural proficiency:

Stay calm and detached, but be clear in response to racist remarks.
By Patricia L. Guerra and Sarah W. Nelson with Laura Ibonvbere

When a parent made a racist comment, a principal's rational response made her values clear.

From the director:

Learning Forward's 'big bet' reaps big wins in practice.
By Stephanie Hirsh

Learning Forward has invested in influencing policy to affect practice and is seeing other benefits with partners in the field.

features

Circles of leadership:

Oregon district redefines coaching roles to find a balance between school and district goals.

By Amy D. Petti

Coaches and teachers working together to improve literacy education with elementary students is just one layer of collaboration. When principals and central office administrators joined the effort, every stakeholder had a deeper understanding of the goals and the support required to bring student learning up to higher levels.

District finds the right equation to improve math instruction.

By Annette Holmstrom

Leaders in math, professional development, and district administration all realized they had an important role to play in a coordinated effort to improve math learning in a Washington district. Professional learning communities concentrated on math-specific instructional strategies to improve student outcomes.

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coming up



in February 2011 *JSD*:
 Working with external partners

New trustees elected

Learning Forward members elected three new members to the Board of Trustees. Julie Blaine of Oak Grove, Mo., Jeff Ronneberg of Minneapolis, Minn., and Granger Ward of San Diego, Calif., will begin their three-year terms at the conclusion of the 2010 Annual Conference in Atlanta in December.

JULIE BLAINE Oak Grove, Mo.

Blaine, an 11-year member, is director at the Central Regional Professional Development Center at the University of Central Missouri. She has served Learning Forward as a member of the awards committee; 2009 Annual Conference program committee co-chair; recipient of the 2007 Distinguished Staff Developer award and the 2003 New Staff Developer of the Year award; and was actively involved with the Missouri Staff Development Council (1999-2005). Her vision, in her new role as trustee, is to see the Learning Forward definition of professional development become a reality in every school district.



JEFF RONNEBERG Minneapolis, Minn.

Ronneberg, a seven-year member, is superintendent for Spring Lake Park Schools in Minneapolis. He has served Learning Forward as a presenter for annual conferences in 2004 and 2007; is a member of the affiliate leaders board (2009-10); president of the Minnesota Staff Development Council (2006-10); and a graduate of Academy 16 (Learning Forward's multiyear learning opportunity). As trustee, he hopes to do everything in his power to ensure that every educator engages in effective professional learning by creating the conditions that result in aligning the work and learning of adults around improving the learning of every student.



GRANGER WARD San Diego, Calif.

Ward, a 20-year member, is executive vice president of AVID Center, a grades 4-12 system that focuses on providing access to four-year colleges for educationally disadvantaged, underachieving school students. He was formerly superintendent of the Manhattan High Schools in New York City and the Grossmont Union High School District in San Diego. He has served Learning Forward as a presenter at several annual conferences. His vision is to support the implementation of the standards and work as an active member of the board to increase quality staff development for educators.



book club

LEADING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Authors Betty J. Alford and Mary Catherine Niño show how to shape a school culture conducive to high academic achievement for all students. An award-winning former principal and a professional development specialist provide the steps for developing teacher capacity, applying successful instructional practices, and advocating for English language learners. Written in straightforward language with quick reference charts, summaries, resources, and tools, the text provides:

- Strategies for creating a culture of ELL advocacy and achievement;
- Case studies from school leaders who have created

- positive change for ELLs;
- Professional development tools that build teachers' knowledge of second language acquisition; and
- Tips for strengthening home-school-community connections. This guide bridges research and practical applications.

Through a partnership with Corwin Press, Learning Forward 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 Book Club to your membership before March 15. It will be mailed in April. For more information about this or any membership package, call 800-727-7288 or e-mail office@learningforward.org.





Good policy enables good practice for teachers and leaders

We live in a world of rules and regulations that govern our lives. Education policy is the collection of laws, rules, and regulations that govern how school systems, and the people within them, operate. In school systems, good policy enables good practice on the part of teachers and leaders. While policy is only as good as its implementation, good policies are a necessary beginning. The policy context in which we live and work determines whether we can easily navigate decisions and shape practices that help our children and teachers succeed or whether we have to spend our time fighting to gain ground for creativity, innovation, and good practices.

Federal, state, and local policy decisions influence the work of teachers and by extension their ability to work with students effectively. Many education policies are context-specific because, for example, they are made through collective bargaining agreements. But not all policies are helpful. Here is an example of a district policy that is not in the best interest of students or teachers:

A school district decided to increase summer school offerings to include courses that would engage, excite, and motivate students. A group of interested

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Ingrid Carney is president of Learning Forward's board of trustees.

on board INGRID CARNEY

teachers created the course descriptions and gathered necessary resources. They proposed photography, newspaper writing, chess for critical thinking, and exploring careers in sports, to name a few. As the developers of these new courses, the teachers were excited to have opportunities to teach the courses and motivate their students. But, they heard, “Wait a minute, not so fast.” Based on district policy, the teachers who created the ideas and the courses would not be allowed to teach the courses because all summer school assignments must be based on seniority. Because of the policy, teachers were hired to teach the courses even when they had no background or experience in the course content. What started out to be a source of excitement and motivation for a group of innovative teachers ended with frustration and bitter feelings toward the district's policies.

Good policies make the difference between educators spending their time fighting for ideas and resources that promote progress versus making a difference for their students. Good policy making establishes the context and the necessary resources for success. Teachers and principals care deeply about policies that establish class size, standards, assessment, accountability,

Individuals with Disabilities Act and No Child Left Behind implementation, equity, achievement gaps, and professional development, among others.

Effective professional development can be enhanced through state and local policies. Schools that are experiencing success recognize that adult learning is as important as student learning in a continuous improvement cycle. Time for adult learning is a given in the work of many of our

international peers in K-12 education. Effective policy making at federal, state, and local levels can ensure that American teachers do not have to fight for job-embedded learning time. Policy decisions that honor the time that teachers need to continue learning and become highly effective could move K-12 education in the U.S. a long way toward closing the learning gaps between American students and their international peers. The same is true for other policy questions in professional development and education generally. Well-considered policies hold great potential for promoting good practice in our schools and classrooms and making a difference for millions of American students. ■



2010 Learning Forward AWARDS

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DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

Deborah Childs-Bowen,
Decatur, Ga.

Childs-Bowen

CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD

Andy Hargreaves, Chestnut Hill, Mass.
Douglas Reeves, Salem, Mass.



Hargreaves



Reeves



Smith

SUSAN LOUCKS-HORSLEY AWARD

Margaret (Peg) Smith,
Pittsburgh, Pa.



Gallimore



Ermeling

BEST RESEARCH

“Increasing Achievement by Focusing Grade-Level Teams on Improving Classroom Learning:
A Prospective, Quasi-Experimental Study of Title I Schools”
American Educational Research Journal, Vol. 46, No. 4, 1006-1033 (2009)

William M. Saunders, Pearson Learning Teams
Claude N. Goldenberg, Stanford University
Ronald Gallimore, University of California, Los Angeles

“Moving the Learning of Teaching Closer to Practice:
Teacher Education Implications of School-Based Inquiry Teams”
The Elementary School Journal, Vol. 109, No. 5, 537-553 (2009)

Ronald Gallimore, University of California, Los Angeles
Bradley A. Ermeling, Pearson Learning Teams
William M. Saunders, Pearson Learning Teams
Claude N. Goldenberg, Stanford University



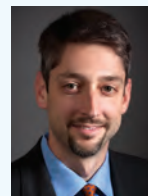
Saunders



Goldenberg

STAFF DEVELOPMENT BOOK OF THE YEAR

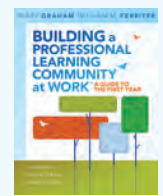
*Building a Professional Learning Community at Work:
A Guide to the First Year*
By Parry Graham and William M. Ferriter
Solution Tree, 2009



Graham



Ferriter



LEARNING FORWARD CALENDAR

Jan. 31, 2011	Deadline to apply to present at 2011 Annual Conference in Anaheim, Calif. www.learningforward.org/annual11
Feb. 15, 2011	Deadline to apply for foundation scholarships and grants. www.learningforward.org/getinvolved/foundation.cfm
Feb. 28, 2011	Deadline to apply for the Learning Forward Academy Class of 2013. www.learningforward.org/opportunities/academy.cfm
April 1, 2011	Deadline for Awards nominations. www.learningforward.org/getinvolved/awards.cfm
July 17-20, 2011	2011 Summer Conference for Teacher Leaders and the Administrators Who Support Them, Indianapolis, Ind.



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

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Rocklin Academy wins first Shirley Hord Learning Team Award

Rocklin Academy in Rocklin, Calif., is the winner of the first Shirley Hord Learning Team Award. This award, from Learning Forward and Corwin Press, is given to a team of teachers who demonstrate Learning Forward's definition of professional development in action.

Seventeen teams from schools in Canada and the United States submitted nominations. Three applicants, Adelpia Elementary School, Freeport, N.J.; Belmont Elementary, Lincoln, Neb.; and Rocklin Academy, Rocklin, Calif., were named finalists. A vote of Learning Forward members determined the winner. See video clips of the three finalists at www.learningforward.org/getinvolved/voteforhordaward.cfm.

E-LEARNING PROGRAM ON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP BEGINS IN JANUARY

Mike Ford, co-author of Learning Forward's new book, *The Life Cycle of Leadership: Surviving and Thriving in Today's Schools*, will facilitate a five-week e-learning program designed to help current and future leaders take a more reflective approach to school leadership. During live sessions and weekly discussions, participants will address the challenges school leaders face and explore how to move beyond simply surviving to becoming a true leader who creates deep, meaningful reform that results in more effective student learning.

Weekly sessions begin at 1 p.m. Eastern time on Tuesday, Jan. 11. Members pay \$199; the nonmember price is \$249. Learn more at

www.learningforward.org/elearning/programs.

STANDARDS REVISION MOVES FORWARD

Representatives from 20 professional associations met with Learning Forward's board president, executive director, and other staff for the first meeting of the Standards Revision Task Force. MetLife Foundation provided a grant to initiate the first phase. Anderson (Rick) Love, senior education program officer at MetLife Foundation, gave opening remarks at the meeting, which was hosted by the National Education Association at its Washington, D.C., headquarters.

The standards revision will be complete in July 2011.

For more information, contact Learning Forward's deputy executive director, Joellen Killion (joellen.killion@learningforward.org).

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Learning Forward's 'big bet' on policy reaps big wins in practice

Several years ago, I served on an advisory committee for Microsoft Partners in Learning, where I heard about the concept of the “big bet.” Microsoft placed big bets on investments promising the biggest returns.

In 2007, NSDC (now Learning Forward) launched a strategic plan. The big bet that emerged as one of our strategic priorities was “affecting the policy context.” The board and staff shared an assumption that policy affects practice and that good policy could promote better practice.

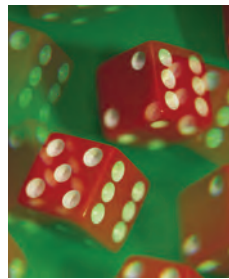
Impacting federal legislation is a huge undertaking. We began by clarifying what parts of the law we wanted to change. René Islas, our federal policy advisor, suggested we focus on promoting a new federal definition of professional development.

The term professional development appears almost 200 times in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Islas said that if we change the definition of the term, we change how it is interpreted throughout the law. So our first step was to write a definition in legislative language. Our

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goal was to translate NSDC's Standards for Staff Development into a single definition that offered a clear vision of effective professional learning in action.

Next, we set out to sell the definition. We worked with Rhode Island Sen. Jack Reed, a longtime advocate of professional development. Spiros Protopsaltis, senior policy advisor in education for U.S. Rep. Jared Polis of Colorado, worked with us to



build a strong coalition of support. Building a constituency required meetings with associations in D.C. and a letter-writing campaign by our members. Ultimately, 14 organizations endorsed the Polis bill and nine representatives signed on to it. The bill was introduced in the 110th and 111th Congress. We will have to wait another year as Congress continues to negotiate ESEA.

As we approach the final year of Learning Forward's strategic plan, we see valuable outcomes from our federal policy efforts:

- Just as our standards continue to shape the field of professional development, our definition has contributed to efforts to improve practice by clarifying a compelling vision for professional learning.
- Powerful conversations with education leaders of national associations and organizations

contributed to a growing consensus about high expectations for professional learning in schools.

- Advocating for more emphasis on evaluating the impact of federally funded professional development contributed to a Department of Education initiative to develop more tools for local school systems to use in assessing professional development.
- A successful Race to the Top application that indicated professional development would be aligned to NSDC's Standards for Staff Development impacted the applications of new states in Round 2 and professional development providers seeking to do business with Race to the Top winners.
- Department of Education guidance documents that accompanied School Improvement Grant applications addressed the key components of the new definition.

Learning Forward's big bet is paying off. While the law hasn't changed yet, our efforts have influenced decision makers, thought leaders, and organization leaders. Our members tell us how they use the definition to guide their own improvement in districts and schools. The definition's introduction in Congress gives educators leverage in their advocacy efforts and strengthens their positions as thought leaders in their school systems. I would say we have had a big win. ■