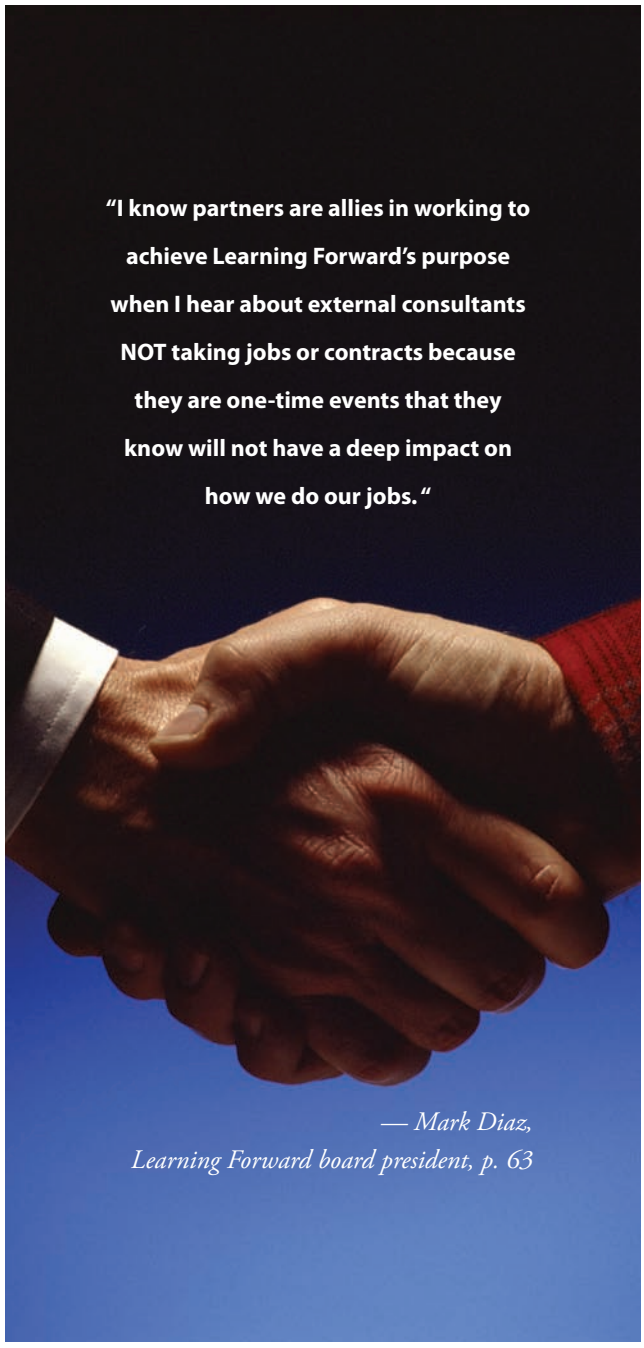
The authority on professional learning

JSD

FEBRUARY 2011, VOLUME 32, NO. 1

theme WORKING WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERS



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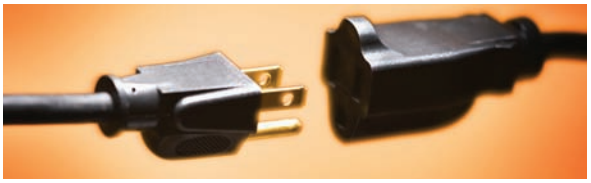

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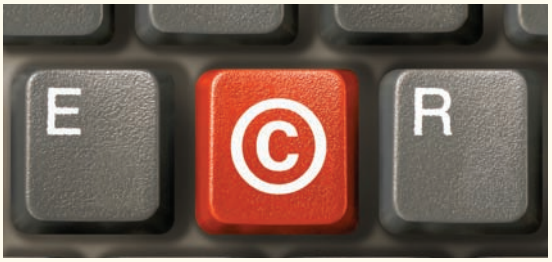

'Outsiders' become key players in making learning sustained and job-embedded

As professional learning has transformed from one-shot and short-term trainings into job-embedded, team-based, and results-driven professional development, so, too, has the perception of the external partner changed from the old-school image of an outside consultant flying in to tell a group of educators what it needs to do.

Once team members have examined appropriate student data to determine their learning needs as educators, they may find that the knowledge they require isn't readily available in their team, school, or district. Partners often have the expertise that a school or team needs as it works through a continuous improvement process. Our definition of effective professional development includes a section on such partners — see Stephanie Hirsh's column on p. 68 to read more about that.

This issue focuses specifically on external partners — partnerships with consultants and technical assistance providers, universities, foundations, and so on. But the word "external" evokes a different connotation than what we've discovered about effective partnerships. Someone who is external is an outsider; there's a distance implied.

Ultimately, effective partnerships are about relationships and collaboration. Many of the valuable external partners we encounter are not outsiders — they're team members. They are members of a learning community at a different level, just as the teacher next door is a partner, a principal is a partner, and the subject-matter team is a roomful of partners. The challenge with partners is the same as the challenge with any team member or learning community: What are the best strategies for managing these collaborative relationships so that each team member can contribute and learn appropriately? How does the team agree on and achieve its goals, tasks, and desired outcomes?

That's why articles in this issue stress the importance of clarity about the roles and responsibilities of partners. As Joellen Killion outlines the questions to ask in setting up productive partnerships, she zeroes in on responsibilities and intentions (p. 10). When Julie Horwitz, Janice Bradley, and Linda Hoy examined their challenges as university faculty members coaching math learning communities, they realized they didn't start out by establishing the kind of role they would play (p. 30).

Shared goals are equally important. While each participant in a partnership enters with a specific set of needs, the relationships flourish when all team members work toward common outcomes. Andrew Lachman and Steven Wlodarczyk learned that, as consultants, they don't benefit from relationships if the districts they work with don't share their values about teaching and learning (p. 16). The fellowship program that Krista Dunbar and Robert Monson write about requires that the central piece of learning work for principal fellows is to address their self-defined school-based challenge (p. 40). The most valuable "outsiders" become key players in making learning sustained and job-embedded — in other words, truly internal.

In this issue, we owe thanks to our partner, The Wallace Foundation. Read the foundation-sponsored piece, "Collaboration paints a bright future for arts education" (p. 44), showcasing what the foundation has learned through its commitment to research in arts education. We also welcome the voice of Learning Forward board president Mark Diaz (p. 63). When the board president shares his perspective in each issue, he writes from his perspective as a member, as a representative of your needs and your world. He joins me in welcoming your input anytime. ■

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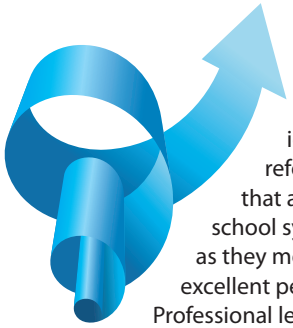
Tracy Crow (tracy.crow@learningforward.org) is associate director of publications for Learning Forward.

FROM POOR TO GOOD TO GREAT

How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better
McKinsey & Company, November 2010

How does a poorly performing school system become good, and a good one become excellent? This report analyzes 20 systems from around the world, all with improving but differing levels of performance, and examines how each has achieved significant and sustained gains in student outcomes, as measured by international and national assessments. The report identifies the reform elements that are replicable for school systems elsewhere as they move from poor to excellent performance. Professional learning is a key element across all performance stages in all systems. Systems further along the journey rely on collaborative practice to improve teaching and to make teachers accountable to each other.



www.mckinsey.com/clientservice/social_sector/our_practices/education/knowledge_highlights/how%20school%20systems%20get%20better.aspx

NEWS ROUNDUP

Professional Development: Sorting Through the Jumble to Achieve Success
Education Week, November 2010

Education Week reporters draw on interviews with teachers, administrators, and scholars in this special report on teacher professional development. The articles examine many facets of teacher learning, including its research base, vendors, implementation in districts, cost, and evolution.

www.edweek.org/ew/collections/pdreport-2010/index.html

DATA SYSTEMS EXAMINED

Putting Data Into Practice: Lessons From New York City
Education Sector, October 2010

School districts and states have made impressive advances in collecting and managing data used for accountability purposes. This case study looks at New York City's efforts to create an evidence-based and collaborative teaching culture and offers lessons for other schools and systems seeking to maximize the use of data to drive and inform classroom-level instruction to improve student performance. Two critical components of the district's strategy are regular collection and analysis of assessment data and the use of teacher inquiry teams that focus intensely on small groups of students.

www.educationsector.org/publications/putting-data-practice

PRINCIPAL PREPARATION

Districts Developing Leaders: Lessons on Consumer Actions and Program Approaches From Eight Urban Districts
Education Development Center, October 2010

This report, commissioned by The Wallace Foundation, examines efforts in eight districts (supported by Wallace grants) to revamp university leader preparation programs and offers insights on effective leadership preparation practices for aspiring principals. Among the findings was the concept that districts exercised their influence as consumers of leadership preparation programs in different ways — as a discerning customer, as a competitor, and as a collaborator. The report also found that evolving state policies influenced leadership development programs.

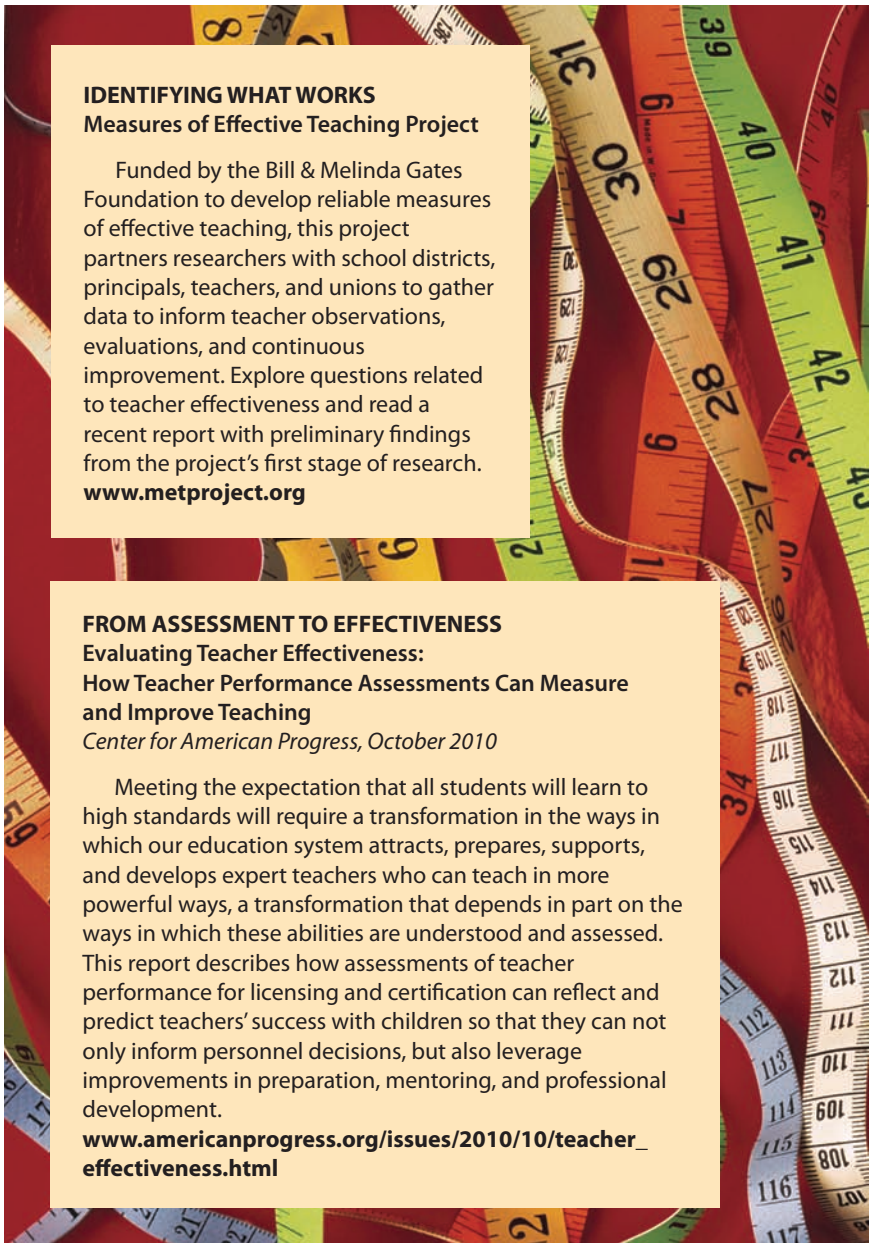
www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/CurrentAreasofFocus/EducationLeadership/Pages/districts-developing-leaders.aspx

UNEQUAL ACCESS

Not Prepared for Class: High-Poverty Schools Continue to Have Fewer In-Field Teachers
The Education Trust, November 2010

High-poverty schools continue to have a disproportionately high number of out-of-field and inexperienced teachers, despite No Child Left Behind requirements, says the Education Trust's latest report. The authors analyze recent data from the U.S. Department of Education's 2007-08 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) for out-of-field and first-year instructor rates and offer six recommendations for how districts and states can change these patterns. One recommendation is to make data about teacher quality and equality public, and another is for states to adopt a policy to prohibiting disproportionate assignment of high- or low-quality teachers.

www.edtrust.org/dc/publication/not-prepared-for-class-high-poverty-schools-continue-to-have-fewer-in-field-teachers



IDENTIFYING WHAT WORKS
Measures of Effective Teaching Project

Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to develop reliable measures of effective teaching, this project partners researchers with school districts, principals, teachers, and unions to gather data to inform teacher observations, evaluations, and continuous improvement. Explore questions related to teacher effectiveness and read a recent report with preliminary findings from the project's first stage of research.
www.metproject.org

FROM ASSESSMENT TO EFFECTIVENESS
Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness: How Teacher Performance Assessments Can Measure and Improve Teaching
Center for American Progress, October 2010

Meeting the expectation that all students will learn to high standards will require a transformation in the ways in which our education system attracts, prepares, supports, and develops expert teachers who can teach in more powerful ways, a transformation that depends in part on the ways in which these abilities are understood and assessed. This report describes how assessments of teacher performance for licensing and certification can reflect and predict teachers' success with children so that they can not only inform personnel decisions, but also leverage improvements in preparation, mentoring, and professional development.
www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/10/teacher_effectiveness.html

STUDENT ASSESSMENT CONTINUUM

EdSteps
Council of Chief State School Officers

This grassroots effort led by the Council of Chief State School Officers aims to give teachers, parents, and students a web-based resource for comparing their student work to that of other students. The centerpiece will be a large, public library of student work samples in key skill areas that are typically difficult and costly to assess. For each skill area, student work will be presented in a continuum from emerging to accomplished work that will allow teachers, parents, and students to measure individual progress.
www.edsteps.org

JSD STAFF
Editor: Tracy Crow
Designer: Kitty Black
Copy editor: Sue Chevalier

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

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IN THIS ISSUE OF *JSD* **THE LEARNING STARTS HERE**

MODELS OF STRONG PARTNERS

The Summer 2010 issues of Learning Forward's newsletters highlighted the work of schools and districts that collaborated meaningfully with an external organization to further existing goals. Funded by MetLife Foundation, the following issues offer examples of how educators established productive relationships with very different types of partners.

The Learning System, Summer 2010

This issue highlights work in Austin, Texas, schools that included collaboration with the New Teacher Center and its National Teacher Induction Network.

www.learningforward.org/news/issueDetails.cfm?issueID=303

The Learning Principal, Summer 2010

Schools around the country turn to New Leaders for New Schools and its EPIC Knowledge System to investigate and share best practices in school improvement.

www.learningforward.org/news/issueDetails.cfm?issueID=305

Tools for Schools, Summer 2010

The Asia Society's Partnership for Global Learning works with educators to expand and explore global competence in grades K-12.

www.learningforward.org/news/issueDetails.cfm?issueID=304

Teachers Teaching Teachers, May 2010

Students and teachers intentionally investigate what it takes to get really good at something with the support of What Kids Can Do and its Practice Project.

www.learningforward.org/news/issueDetails.cfm?issueID=301

CONNECTIONS LEAD TO INNOVATION

ideas

"Innovation is fostered by information gathered from new connections; from insights gained by journeys into other disciplines or places; from active, collegial networks and fluid, open boundaries. Innovation arises from ongoing circles of exchange, where information is not just accumulated or stored, but created. Knowledge is generated anew from connections that weren't there before."

Source: Wheatley, M.J. (2006). *Leadership and the new science: Discovering order in a chaotic world* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Almost any partnership benefits from a written agreement outlining the aims of the partnership and responsibilities of those involved. Whether the agreement is as formal as a contract, which will be required in many vendor relationships, a memorandum of understanding, or a simple letter, all partners will develop greater clarity and understanding. At its most fundamental, a written agreement will include:

- Overview of the purpose of the partnership;
- Names of the partners or organizations entering into the agreement;
- Key responsibilities of each partner;
- Expected outcomes of the partnership; and
- General timeline of tasks and outcomes.

Depending on the type of partnership, such agreements may also include details about ownership of anything produced as a result of the partnership, financial responsibilities, reporting or evaluation requirements, and other required legal arrangements.

Putting agreements in writing does not indicate a lack of trust. As with many of the guidelines suggested in the articles that follow, potential partners who are clear about their intentions are most likely to benefit from their experiences.

What I know about effective partnerships

The prospect of working with external partners can conjure a variety of images, some positive, some negative (Stephanie Hirsh mentions the idea of vultures in her column on p. 68).

Within and beyond your professional life, you have most likely been a partner or had a partner in many different contexts. As you read and share the articles in this issue of *JSD*, think first about what you know about partnerships. Answer these questions to remember past experiences, examine assumptions, and consider new possibilities. Reframe the questions from a team's perspective if that is appropriate.

• How do I define partner? What are the three or four defining characteristics I consider essential?

• What partnerships have helped me the most professionally? Why?

• What partnerships gave me unexpected frustrations? What could have happened differently to achieve greater success?

• What challenges am I facing now where a partner could be a real benefit? What would it take for me to pursue such a partnership?

• What are my greatest strengths as a partner?

• How do I need to grow to become a better partner?

Grantmakers for Education, a membership association for foundations that fund education initiatives, recently surveyed its members to understand their funding priorities for 2010 and to ask what they anticipated for 2011. More than 160 members responded; selected priorities are highlighted in the table below.

In terms of strategies that would help foundations achieve a greater impact, Grantmakers for Education members identified engaging in public policy and collaborating wisely with other funders as important. They see a wider range of grant-making roles as funders seek to improve education.

Finally, respondents indicated that professional development, teacher effectiveness and performance, and school leadership were among learning priorities for the funding field.

		ANTICIPATED CHANGES		
Priority	**% that fund now**	**Up**	**Equal**	**Down**
Teacher professional development	72%	27%	51%	6%
Effective school and/or district leadership	59%	17%	58%	7%
School turnaround/ low-performing schools	47%	24%	53%	3%
Teacher preparation/ certification	39%	13%	65%	3%
Data systems/ performance management	38%	13%	63%	3%
Teacher performance and compensation systems	24%	14%	62%	2%

Source: Grantmakers for Education. (2010). *Benchmarking 2010: Trends in education philanthropy.* Available at www.edfunders.org/about/index.asp.

THE PERFECT PARTNERSHIP

What it takes to build and sustain relationships that benefit students

By Joellen Killion

Schools and districts are beneficiaries of multiple opportunities to extend and enhance their core work of educating students through partnerships in two ways. These opportunities emerge either from invitations that come from outside the school and district, such as those from corporations, universities, or regional education agencies, or they are sought, such as through grant applications to public and private foundations or in selecting consultants to support initiatives. When partnership opportunities occur, thoughtful analysis of the opportunity before entering into a partnership ensures that the endeavor will thrive.

Any partnership offers both opportunity and risk. Assessing the potential of each partnership before entering into a relationship becomes a fundamental responsibility for school and district leaders. So, too, will potential partners want to consider carefully the benefits and costs of the partnership.

Partnerships give schools and districts opportunities they would not otherwise have. In times of decreasing revenue for schools, some partnerships seem more attractive. They come in so many different forms: advertising on school buses; individual and school grants from the local education foundation; research studies with regional universities; vendor sponsorships to pilot instructional resources; initiative grants from private foundations or corporations such as the World Wildlife Fund-Canada and Loblaw Companies Limited joint grants to promote environmentally conscious schools; or grants from provincial ministries of education or federal agencies in the U.S. such as NASA, National Science Foundation, or the Institute of Education Sciences at the Department of Education. Each form of partnership has one common element: Each partner has its own expectations and goals.

Partnership requires trust and commitment. As in any long-term relationship, those entering partnerships explore several fundamental questions:

- What are our goals, vision, and dreams?
- What do we seek in a partner?
- What are our expectations for this partnership?
- How will we each contribute reciprocally to the fulfillment of the other partner's goals, mission, and vision?

Genuine partnerships are mutually beneficial experiences. When partners enter a relationship, they do so for one another's mutual benefit to accelerate the achievement

of their individual and shared goals with a commitment to work collaboratively to strengthen their relationship.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Some schools and districts as well as nonprofit education agencies seem to attract partnerships, while others do not. Lasting partnerships are cultivated through purposeful relationship building. What attracts one potential partner to a school or district may differ from what attracts another. Overall, some keys to cultivating partnerships are clarity of goals and strategies, demonstrated success, and consideration of the partner's needs.

Taking time to get to know the interests, priorities, needs, and goals of potential partners pays dividends later on. Understanding what is important to potential partners, their major accomplishments, what they want to achieve through the partnership, and what their areas of focus are allows partners to understand how they can contribute to each other's success. Without a deep understanding of and commitment to achieve the partner's goals as well as one's own, partners may find the relationship unfulfilling.

While it is not possible to identify every cost in advance, it is important for partners to be as explicit about their expectations of one another as possible.

Successful partnerships are mutually rewarding. When each partner clearly articulates the organization's goals and intended strategies for accomplishing those goals, confidence in the capacity and competence to achieve the goals builds in the other partner.

ASSESSING POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIP

When opportunities for partnerships emerge, partners begin by considering a number of factors before signing on the dotted line. The list of questions below offers some criteria for considering whether a potential partnership is mutually beneficial.

How will this partnership add value to our existing goals and planned strategies?

Both partners have established goals and plans for achieving them. Just because partnership opportunities emerge, partners do not need to change their goals, add goals, or sacrifice their own goals. Strong partnerships enhance each partner's goals rather than add work or distract either partner from their mission or goals.

What benefits, real or intangible, will each partner realize?

Benefits typically include resources — financial, human, or physical — that accelerate goal achievement. Often partnerships are built on a financial basis, as when grants are given. Yet not all partnerships have a financial benefit. Sometimes partnership has benefits that are not typically considered, yet are enormously valuable. For example, a school that has a commitment from a university faculty member to provide guidance or support might not be getting a specific grant from the university. Rather, the school is getting the service of an expert who has access to other professionals who might either provide direct support to the school or offer advice with the expert to share with the school. Sometimes being a partner means being included in a network that provides other possibilities such as access to experts, information, or resources.

What are the costs — real, intangible, or possible — of the partnership?

All partnerships have a cost. In the best case, costs can be calculated and weighed carefully when considering the partnership. In most cases, though, costs are hidden and often unknown until the work begins. For example, a district was invited to become a site for a university research study. The benefits to the district were substantial. Over the course of three years, more than 100 teachers would participate in intensive professional development and coaching, receiving accompanying classroom materials. The professional development would take place in the summer and the coaching during the school year. Teachers would receive a stipend for participation. After the project began, the university faculty provided a list of data they wanted from teachers and the district to support the project's evaluation. While the data requested from the district were fairly easy to compile, the district coordinator had not thought to take the project proposal through the district's research review board to seek approval. In addition, data requested from participating teachers were not routine information teachers were required to keep, so the additional information was a substantial burden to teachers. In addition, the new strategies teachers were learning required access to specialized classroom equipment that was not available in most district classrooms. To make full use of the opportunity, the district needed to reallocate textbook adoption resources to buy the needed classroom equipment and delay the purchase of textbooks. The partnership did not get off to a smooth start because of these hidden costs.

Not every cost is a financial one. In some cases, staff will have added responsibilities of managing a project. Often when responsibilities are added, none are removed. While the project is a tremendous opportunity, district or school staff is stretched thin, and other aspects of their work may be affected.

While it is not possible to identify every cost in advance, especially in partnerships with substantial scope, it is important for partners to be as explicit about their expectations of one another as possible.

What are the expectations and requirements for each partner with specifics about timeline for delivering?

A thoughtful partnership plan includes clear expectations of each partner, specifics about deliverables, and firm timelines. When these components are in place, partners have clarity of expecta-

tions and can more easily determine what their individual roles will be. When these elements are unclear, partners form their own expectations or understanding. For more substantive partnerships, partners may choose to prepare and sign a formal memorandum of understanding or agreement. Whether a formal agreement exists or not, both partners are best served by a written plan of action that details expectations, deliverables, and timelines.

What procedures or protocols will be used if one partner wants to alter any aspect of the partnership plan or terminate the relationship?

In the excitement of forging new partnership, partners rarely think about future changes to the agreement or plan. Yet, as time passes and the partnership takes shape, it is likely that some changes will be necessary. For example, unexpected circumstances may delay deliverables. A retirement may mean that a key spokesperson will be replaced. Additional opportunities may expand possibilities. Understanding what process will be used to consider or initiate changes is important to discuss when forming new partnerships.

Each partner entering a partnership has goals. The partnership itself has goals as well. Partners will want to be clear on those goals.

Which decisions related to the partnership will both partners make together? Which may partners make independently?

Both partners do not necessarily make all decisions that affect a partnership jointly. While a consensus decision about each partner's primary representative may be a decision partners agree on, in other partnerships partners may reserve the right to appoint a spokesperson without seeking agreement from the other.

What is the communication process? Who will speak for the partners?

True partners speak with a unified voice. As partners forge agreements about their joint work, they will want to establish an agreement about who speaks for the partnership, what aspects of the work are confidential, how messages about the partnership are shaped in press releases, updates, and reports, and how often partners communicate with one another and their public. For some partnerships, this area can be potentially problematic, especially if the partnership is publically visible and if one partner receives recognition or other benefit as the spokesperson that is not equally afforded to the other partner. If the joint project generates products, the partners will want to clarify how those products will be branded. For example, for private foundation grant-funded initiatives, the funder may hold an expectation that the district's logo and the private foundation logo appear on all products associated with the project. Careful attention to communication issues in advance alleviates surprises and frustrations later in the partnership.

How will disagreements be handled?

While they are never expected, inevitably disagreements will occur. Partners who are uncomfortable with conflict may be hesitant to raise concerns for fear that, by doing so, they will harm the partnership. Knowing in advance how to handle disagreements helps partners be more comfortable with conflict. They may be more willing to express concerns when a process is in place for handling them. Constructive disagreements can strengthen a partnership when both partners know how to manage conflict.

Who will be responsible for managing or supervising the partnership?

Partnerships, depending on the scope, may need a manager or supervisor. In some cases, the partners hire a manager if there is a defined body of work to manage. In other cases, the partners form a steering committee or executive committee with representatives from the various stakeholders served by the partnership. In other cases, a single representative from each partner organization coordinates efforts internally related to a partnership. For example, a school principal may work with the local education foundation executive director to coordinate a project funded by the foundation in the school.

What criteria will be used to measure success? What benchmarks?

Each partner entering a partnership has goals. The partnership itself has goals as well. Partners will want to be clear on those goals and to create a plan for measuring success of the partnership that includes mutually determined indicators of success, possible evidence, and benchmarks to measure progress toward the goals. The formality of the evaluation varies; however, the importance of evaluating the partnership never does. Regardless of the partnership's purpose, partners will want to take time frequently to assess the health of the partnership.

EVALUATING PARTNERSHIPS

Establishing a timeline for check-in conversations, progress monitoring, and ongoing assessment is helpful when planning partnerships. Partners will also want to determine the degree of formality of the evaluation. For example, partners might decide to conduct evaluations jointly or to contract with an external evaluator to conduct a more formal evaluation. Quarterly check-in meetings, annual reviews, or monthly calls are ways partners review and evaluate the partnership. The following questions might guide periodic status conversations:

- What tangible benefits are we each gaining? What evidence do we have of these benefits?
- What intangible benefits are we each gaining? Where have we seen examples of those benefits?
- What challenges are we experiencing in our partnership? How are those challenges affecting us? What strategies will

we implement to alleviate these challenges and prevent them in the future?
- How satisfied are we with the level of communication between us? What changes, if any, would we like to make?
- How are we progressing on our goals? What evidence do we have of our progress? Where are we in terms of our benchmarks?
- What changes do we want to consider at this point?

AVOIDING PARTNERSHIPS

Not every partnership is advantageous, even if it comes with a substantial monetary award. Partnerships that clearly benefit one partner without equally strong benefits for the other partner are likely to be problematic. Partnerships that distract a school or district from its core functions, add goals that are beyond the scope of the partner's current focus, or stretch existing resources too thin are not likely to add value. A partnership that does not meet an immediate, high-priority need or accelerate achievement of clearly defined goals may fragment efforts and resources within a school or district.

It is particularly important to ensure that the partners share common values and assumptions about education, have intersecting goals, and are committed to advancing one another's goals. When a partnership seems too good to be true, it might be.

PERFECTING PARTNERSHIPS

Reciprocally beneficial partnerships expand opportunities and extend the capacity of schools and districts. Schools and districts have much to offer as partners because they are so visible in their communities and because they touch so many members of a community. They have much to gain and potentially much to lose from partnerships. The sure way to find and enter partnerships that add value to each partner is to take adequate time to build relationships with potential partners, assess potential partnerships, evaluate partnerships they enter, and avoid partnerships that might detract from their priorities and immediate needs.

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Joellen Killion (joellen.killion@learningforward.org) is deputy executive director of Learning Forward. ■

PARTNERS *at* EVERY LEVEL

FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE BOARDROOM, CONSULTANTS WORK TOWARD DISTRICT'S GOALS

By Andrew Lachman and Steven Wlodarczyk

As anyone in a partnership — a marriage, a business, a professional relationship — will attest, it takes hard work and energy, time and persistence, and reciprocal commitment to make a partnership successful.

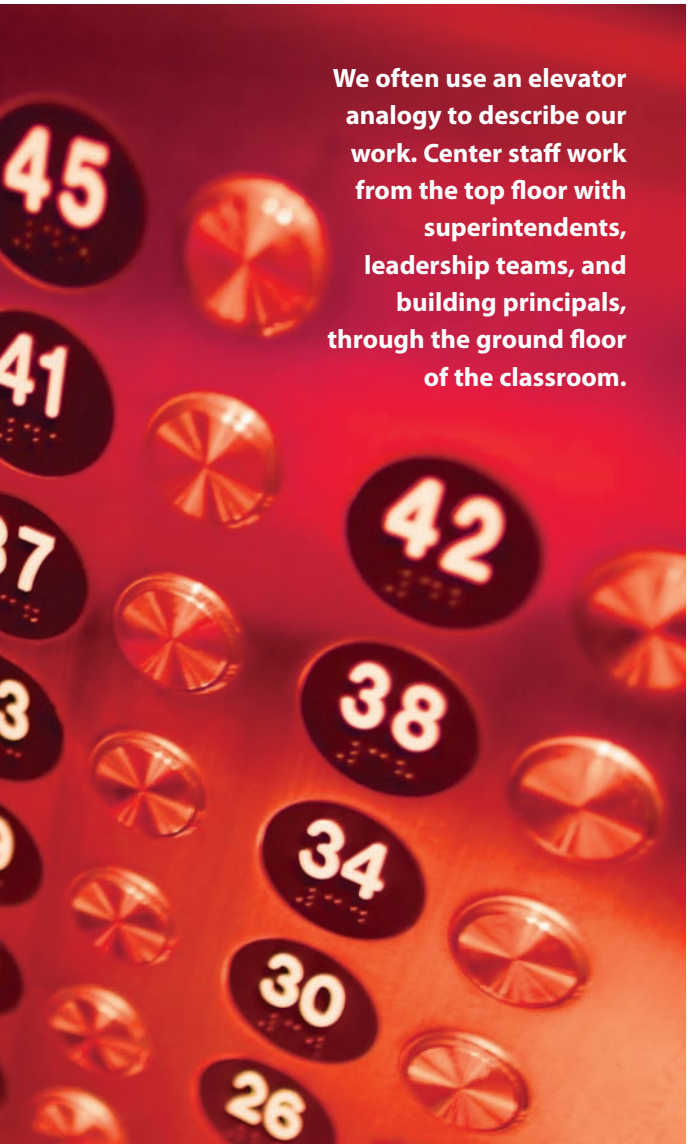
Writing from the perspective of an external partner, we explore here lessons learned from eight years of working with public school districts. As an organization committed to large-scale instructional improvement, the Connecticut Center for School Change partners with six geographically and demographically diverse school districts across the state ranging in size from 2,200 to 15,000 students. Our work is informed by the concept that "system success equals student success." The center works in partnership with district leaders to develop leadership, build organizational capacity, and enhance knowledge. Unlike many of the relationships — programmatic, commercial transactions — that districts have with external partners for professional development, our partnerships are systemic, long-term, mutually respectful relationships grounded in Learning Forward's Standards for Staff Development (NSDC, 2001).

Our partnerships are based on the beliefs that:

- Partnering and collaboration are essential skills for success in the 21st century.
- The work of instructional improvement at scale requires collaboration and teaming across all levels of the organization and with stakeholders and external partners.
- Schools and districts must work collaboratively in order to become high-performing systems that improve student achievement.
- Organizations must continue to learn in order to improve and to sustain improvements in practice.

HOW PARTNERSHIPS WORK

Our theory of action regarding district partnerships is



We often use an elevator analogy to describe our work. Center staff work from the top floor with superintendents, leadership teams, and building principals, through the ground floor of the classroom.

that a partnership will achieve improved student success, efficiency, effectiveness, and learning if we do the following:

- Identify districts that share our core beliefs and our goals for student success;
- Work with districts that are enacting a compatible theory of action;
- State explicitly our expectations for district improvement, roles and responsibilities, time and structures for joint planning and reflection; and
- Collaborate and work toward a shared outcome.

We approach our district partnerships with the overarching goal of building on their work without predetermining what the district needs. As former district administrators, the center's staff members have a high regard for school districts and their efforts to improve instructional practice despite conflicting needs and demands, regulatory agency progress monitoring, media scrutiny, and increasingly scarce resources. We respect the district culture, context, and conditions and recognize that there is no magic bullet or single correct answer that will lead to organizational transformation and to high achievement for all students.

What does collaborative, on-site technical assistance support to districts look like in practice? The center's staff spends four to six days a month in a district, acting as advisors, thought partners, coaches, and critical friends to superintendents, assistant superintendents, senior district leadership, principals, and other staff members. Over a long-term, multiyear relationship, the center's staff works with district leaders to help them develop systemic thinking, generate theories of action, employ coherent strategies, align resources, develop and support effective leadership teams, ensure accountability, engage stakeholders, and sustain improvements. Center staff help districts address the factors that support or hinder continuous improvement: culture (beliefs and values about adult and student learning); conditions (time, structures, and schedules); and competencies (professional skills and knowledge).

We approach our district partnerships with the overarching goal of building on their work without predetermining what the district needs.

The primary focus of the partnership work is the instructional core (the relationship between students, teachers, and curriculum content and the tasks students are asked to do).

In *Instructional Rounds in Education: A Network Approach to Improving Teaching and Learning,* City, Elmore, Fiarman, and Teitel argue that increases in student learning occur only as a consequence of improvements in the level of content, teachers' knowledge and skill, and student engagement (2009). They also suggest that changes in any one component of the instructional core require changes in the other two. Furthermore, they note that if changes — in governance, structure, funding, or the length of the school day — don't directly impact the instructional core, then they won't make a real impact on student performance.

We often use an elevator analogy to describe our work. While center staff concentrate on working on the top floor with superintendents, their leadership teams, and building principals, center staff also know that working on the ground floor, and from the classroom up to the boardroom, is important. So, it is not unusual for center staff to observe and collect evidence at a grade-level data team meeting, to coach a principal during the day, or to attend a school board meeting to respond to questions about the partnership at night.

The partnership's goal is to foster an increased sense of

urgency about and focus on improving the learning of all students. As one superintendent put it, "What has resulted from our partnership is a much clearer understanding of the importance of growing the roots of continuous improvement deep into the organization and the very critical importance of placing the specific, desired improvement in student learning at the center of all continuous improvement strategies."

PARTNERS IN ACTION

One specific example of our work is helping a small urban district improve the effectiveness of data teams. At the request of the superintendent, center staff collected data through observations, interviews, and surveys about how schools implemented data teams — a core component of the district's theory of action. We found a great deal of variation in the fidelity of implementation and the quality of data team conversations within and across schools. We brought that data to the director of curriculum and the superintendent. In response to the data, the district revamped its professional development to focus on building learning communities, and transformed its administrative meetings from business to instructional purposes.

Districts and their external partners should plan for the long haul, commit to several years of mutual engagement, and meet at least quarterly to align their resources and monitor their efforts toward improving instruction and student learning.

The meetings provided principals with a community of practice and professional development around a shared understanding of what high-quality data teams should look like, what the discourse should sound like, and how to use a set of tools and rubrics to monitor data teams in their buildings. Center staff provided coaching, facilitation, and critical friendship to the new structure. The district also established a stakeholder group of teachers and administrators to ensure shared ownership and engagement. To ensure that data teams were indeed focusing on instructional practices and improving student achievement, the principals instituted accountability procedures. They gained new insight into the importance of their presence at data team meetings, collected minutes, and required data team members to make commitment pledges for next steps. The principals provided teachers with resources to become more effective in designing lessons based on data, and conversations at data team meetings became more focused on instruction.

From that and other partnership experiences with districts, we've learned some lessons that may help districts rethink and restructure their relationships with external partners to ensure that districts are working on the right stuff in the right ways to produce better student outcomes:

Build relationships. Entering into and sustaining a partnership is challenging work. The first order of business for partners is to develop common understandings, shared language, and trust. Bryk and Schneider (2002) have demonstrated that relational trust improves program implementation and student outcomes. To be effective, external partners have to be welcomed as part of the district team. They need access to all aspects of district operations, to all levels, and to all the systems (human resources, finance, professional development, accountability, etc.) that affect organizational, adult, and student performance.

Make time. Partnerships need time for joint planning and reflection, including time to debrief what worked, what didn't, and how it could be improved and time to revise strategies and action steps to ensure the partnership continues to add value. Time provides the connective tissue that binds the partnership together.

Develop leadership. External partners can play a role as coaches to building and central office leadership, and as facilitators and instructors of leadership development programs.

Leadership has to be broadly distributed and widely shared. There must be understanding and commitment to the work of instructional improvement from the top — the superintendent and board of education — down. Without it, it is next to impossible to achieve coherence, mobilize resources, and ensure follow-through. But at the same time, successful district partnerships support building administrators as instructional leaders and broaden leadership ranks to include teachers, teacher leaders, and staff developers.

Pursue a path. As the Cheshire Cat tells Alice in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, "If you don't know where you want to go, then it really doesn't matter which road you take." Having a shared framework among partners, a common conceptual map, increases the likelihood of coherent action. It helps keep district and external partners focused, limits the number of initiatives, and concentrates effort on a few key strategies. It helps ensure that districts and external partners are heading in the same direction, working on the right work and not sidetracked by distractions that will have people traveling aimlessly. As one assistant superintendent noted, "We have been able to positively impact the quality of teaching and learning in our district using a coherent systems thinking model that provides clarity to our district, school, and teacher goals. This clarity has allowed us to sustain our focus on the instructional core, ensuring that our collective efforts result in more students learning at higher levels."

Keep on keeping on. Districts and their external partners should plan for the long haul, commit to several years of mutual engagement, and meet at least quarterly to align their resources and monitor their efforts toward improving instruction and student learning. Changing culture (values, attitudes, be-

liefs) and structures (roles, responsibilities, rules of engagement) is not an easy task. It takes hard work, persistence, and a commitment to continuous improvement. Changing the organization's genetic structure and getting innovations deeply embedded in the ways of doing work requires much more than a series of workshops.

There should be frequent opportunities for the district and its partners to reflect on progress and ways of improving the "how" and the "what" of the work.

Engage stakeholders. Districts and their external partners must involve multiple stakeholders and build constituencies for educational improvement both inside (with unions, parents, and boards of education) and outside (with residents, businesses, faith communities, community agencies, and government) the district. The long-term goal is sustainability. As Hill, Campbell, and Harvey have written (2000), it takes a city to ensure that educational reforms continue beyond the tenure of a superintendent, principal, or outside external partner. Shifting ownership from the central leadership team to a broad coalition of stakeholders is essential for sustainability. External partners can help keep this issue front and center, and can provide an outside perspective on the effort.

Demand accountability. External partners and districts must be accountable for their actions and for delivering on their commitments. There should be frequent opportunities for the district and its partners to reflect on progress and ways of improving the "how" and the "what" of the work. Accountability requires multiple evidence sources that mark progress (or the lack thereof) toward improving student achievement and enables the partners to reflect on lessons learned.

Transforming education and improving our public schools so that they can meet the challenges of the 21st century are not easy tasks. External partners can help schools and districts meet these challenges if they work collaboratively, effectively, and intelligently.

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Andrew Lachman (alachman@ctschoolchange.org) is executive director and Steven Wlodarczyk (swlo@ctschoolchange.org) is education program officer at Connecticut Center for School Change in Hartford, Conn. Wlodarczyk was Learning Forward's first president and served on the board for two separate terms. He received the Distinguished Service Award in 1985. ■

THE LIGHT BULB CLICKS ON

CONSULTANTS HELP TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND COACHES SEE THE VALUE OF LEARNING TEAMS

By Ed Tobia, Ramona Chauvin, Dale Lewis, and Patti Hammel

Sometimes partners find one another when they're not looking. In South Carolina, education leaders at Georgetown County School District were seeking only information when they attended a workshop sponsored by the South Carolina Department of Education. The two-day learning experience, provided by SEDL, a nonprofit organization based in Austin, Texas, guided participants through a structured approach that clearly defines the work of professional learning teams. Patti Hammel, the district's executive director for student performance and federal programs, and Michael Caviris, a middle school principal, grew increasingly excited as they listened. The approach was exactly what their district had been seeking: a way to capitalize on efforts already under way to help teachers work more collaboratively.

In the previous year, district leaders had focused on developing the capacity of teams of teachers to display and analyze data. The initiative was showing progress. Teachers were learning to work in teams to unpack the data, but the effort had yet to pay off in classrooms. Hammel knew that with a little extra help, the data teams could transform into true professional learning teams. As she listened to the SEDL presenters describe their approach, Hammel realized what that something was — a partner, in particular a partner with expertise and experience in constructing collaborative professional learning designs.

Hammel and Caviris realized that SEDL's approach to professional learning provided a way to enhance what the Georgetown County School District was already doing. "Our teachers were planning together, but we knew we needed to do something more," Caviris said. "When SEDL shared the process for reflecting on student work and adjusting instruction based on that reflection, Hammel and I looked at each other and said, 'This is it. This makes sense as our next step.'"

ESTABLISHING THE PARTNERSHIP

During an initial brainstorming visit between district staff and SEDL representatives, ideas and goals soon solidified into a scope of work. Using funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), SEDL and the district agreed on a two-year contract. The partnership would focus on deepening the district's commitment to collaborative professional learning and to building teachers' capacity to use student work and data to guide instruction. While the scope of work initially targeted three middle schools, an elementary school in restructuring was added to the contract, and developing professional learning teams soon became a districtwide focus.

During the planning phase, SEDL staff worked with the Georgetown County School District to create a plan to meet the district's specific needs. Based on the data, the partners agreed on literacy as a focus for the professional learning teams. SEDL then assembled a team able to provide this tailored support: a literacy specialist with a strength in adolescent literacy, a specialist with an extensive background in special education, a specialist in school improvement and leadership development, and an evaluation specialist. All team members had strong backgrounds in designing and implementing job-embedded professional development. Including an evaluator on the team provided an added benefit. Because the partnership relied on ARRA funds, an evaluator would be able to provide the data and reports needed to fulfill the transparency requirements for state and federal reporting as well as ongoing feedback to improve the process and the impact of the professional learning teams on instruction.

THE WORK

The partnership began work in earnest in July 2009 with SEDL's introduction of the process Hammel and Caviris had been drawn to: the Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle. The Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle is a standards-based approach that provides a focus and a structure to the conversations teachers have in professional learning teams (Cowan, 2009; Tobia, 2007; von Frank, 2009a).

Since district leaders wanted to have professional learning teams implemented at all schools, not only the ones being targeted, SEDL staff held a four-day leadership institute to engage principals, assistant principals, instructional coaches, and central office administrators in an in-depth study of the learning cycle. In keeping with the district plan, the institute focused on how to use the approach to support literacy across the curriculum. By the end of the event, each of the school's leadership teams had a plan for introducing the learning cycle to teachers.

p. 24 Elements that made the partnership succeed

p. 25 The Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle

To support the Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle's implementation, the SEDL team visited each target school for three days each month to provide guidance. The team also met with principals, instructional coaches, and district staff to ensure the development of a culture of collaboration focused on improving instruction and literacy throughout the system. SEDL provided a variety of on-site supports. The literacy specialist worked with teachers to build their content knowledge and skill with instructional strategies. The school improvement specialist focused on helping leaders and teachers implement the cycle, create the conditions for its success, and carry out the leadership actions that support it (see von Frank, 2009b, for additional information about SEDL's approach to building the conditions for success). SEDL staff also helped principals, other administrators, and school coaches assess progress by attending professional learning team meetings, conducting classroom walkthroughs, and holding one-on-one meetings to build leaders' capacity to support teachers. After each site visit, SEDL and district staff debriefed, reflecting on what aspects of the professional learning teams seemed to be working and what still needed improvement.

In addition to the Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle, SEDL also provided the book *Becoming a Learning School* (Killion & Roy, 2009). Soon after SEDL staff introduced the book, the district purchased copies for all of its principals and instructional coaches. The ideas in the book and the accompanying CD have provided additional guidance for the debriefing sessions. SEDL staff also facilitated chapter discussions during conference calls with the princi-

What GCSD values about SEDL

- SEDL provides a team with the experience and expertise to facilitate the district's efforts to coordinate professional learning teams with current initiatives:
  - A team leader to provide resources, share expertise, and evaluate progress;
  - A reading specialist to teach and model quality reading instruction in primary, intermediate, and adolescent literacy; and
  - A special education specialist to maintain the focus on core instruction while supporting students needing special education.
- SEDL takes the time to develop an understanding of the district culture and to foster a culture where all participants feel a level of comfort.
- SEDL tailors the design of its initiative to have administrators and teacher leaders own the process and carry it forward once the partnership has ended.
- SEDL provides a flexible process and tailors it to meet the specific needs of the district.
- SEDL provides guidance so that partners can craft a flexible plan of improvement to change the way teachers and administrators look at instruction, differentiation, assessment, student work, and overall performance.

What SEDL values about GCSD

- The district has a designated staff member responsible for coordinating the work of the partnership. This staff member has:
  - Time to regularly attend meetings and conference calls with SEDL staff;
  - Access to the superintendent;
  - Access to principals and instructional coaches;
  - Access to professional development funds; and
  - A clear sense of the importance of collaborative professional learning.
- The work of the partnership is connected to a districtwide commitment to the initiative rather than an attempt to fix a few schools.
- The superintendent and school board are committed to the initiative.
- The district and schools work to ensure that all teachers have common planning time for job-embedded professional learning.
- The district has invested in a cadre of school-based and districtwide instructional coaches who meet with district leaders on a regular basis to maintain the district priority of continuous instructional improvement.
- There is an openness to learning on the part of both district and school personnel.

pals at the target schools. These calls provided a way to continue the work and sustain progress between site visits.

The expertise of SEDL's special education specialist also played a key role at this stage in the project. South Carolina public schools, like many others throughout the nation, are endeavoring to help more students with disabilities attain proficiency on state assessments, even as the bar continues to rise. This effort has highlighted the need to ensure that students with disabilities receive instruction in the grade-level content standards being assessed. Finding the time for general and special educators to collaborate can be challenging, however. The Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle addresses this challenge by creating a structure and school culture that promotes and enables collaboration. General and special educators can then combine their strengths to benefit both groups. In short, general educators provide knowledge of the curriculum standards; special educators offer an understanding of scaffolding and how to adapt learning experiences for students with varied needs.

ROLE OF EVALUATION

Throughout the project, the evaluation component of the partnership has provided key feedback. Initially, evaluation efforts focused on tracking the progress of teachers in the target schools. But the SEDL team soon began also using evaluation results to inform district leaders in how best to support schools and teachers. For example, evaluation results helped guide the design of the second year's summer institute for the district leadership teams, which now include lead teachers from each school. Results from site visits, interviews, and surveys indicated that teachers were effectively collaborating in teams to plan lessons. However, teachers were still struggling with analyzing student work and adjusting instruction based on those analyses. In teachers' minds, adjusting instruction often meant just going back and reteaching a concept for a day and then moving on. Evaluation results highlighted this problem, and SEDL staff then focused on that area at the summer institute.

WHAT MADE THE PARTNERSHIP SUCCESSFUL

The Georgetown County School District-SEDL partnership has flourished. One significant change has been that teachers who were initially skeptical of the process have now embraced it. For example, at one team's first professional learning team meeting, members sat with arms folded and spread out around the room. That team now works as a tight-knit group that has deep and meaningful conversations about teaching and learning. Based on survey results and interviews, the light bulb seems

THE PROFESSIONAL TEACHING AND LEARNING CYCLE

1. Study
Teachers work in collaborative planning teams (grade-level, vertical, or departmental) to examine and discuss learning expectations from the selected state standards. Teachers working collaboratively develop a common understanding of:
- The concepts and skills students need to know and be able to do to meet the expectations in the standards;
- How the standards for a grade or course are assessed on state and local tests; and
- How the standards fit within a scope and sequence of the district curriculum.

2. Select
Collaborative planning teams research and select instructional strategies and resources for enhancing learning as described in the standards. Teachers working collaboratively:
- Identify effective research-based strategies and appropriate resources that will be used to support learning in the selected state standards; and
- Agree on appropriate assessment techniques that will be used to provide evidence of student learning.

3. Plan
Planning teams formally develop a common lesson incorporating the selected strategies and agree on the type of student work each teacher will use later (in the analyze stage) as evidence of student learning. Teachers working collaboratively:
- Develop a common formal plan outlining the lesson objectives, the materials to be used, the procedures, the time frame for the lesson, and the activities in which students will be engaged; and
- Decide what evidence of student learning will be collected during the implementation.

4. Implement
Teachers carry out the planned lesson, make note of implementation successes and challenges, and gather evidence of student learning. Teachers working collaboratively:
- Deliver the lesson as planned within the specified time period;
- Record results, especially noting where students struggled and/or where instruction did not achieve expected outcomes; and
- Collect the agreed-upon evidence of student learning to take back to the collaborative planning team.

5. Analyze
Teachers gather again in collaborative teams to examine student work and discuss student understanding of the standards. Teachers working collaboratively:
- Revisit and familiarize themselves with the standards before analyzing student work;
- Analyze a sampling of student work for evidence of student learning;
- Discuss whether students have met the expectations outlined in the standards and make inferences about the strengths, weaknesses, and implications of instruction; and
- Identify what students know and what skills or knowledge needs to be strengthened in future lessons.

6. Adjust
Collaborative teams reflect on the implications of the analysis of student work. Teachers discuss alternative instructional strategies or modifications to the original instructional strategy that may be better suited to promoting student learning. Teachers working collaboratively:
- Reflect on their common or disparate teaching experiences;
- Consider and identify alternative instructional strategies for future instruction;
- Refine and improve the lesson; and
- Determine when the instructional modifications will take place, what can be built into subsequent lessons, and what needs an additional targeted lesson.

Source: SEDL, 2005.

to have clicked on for teachers, administrators, and coaches regarding what it really means to dig deeply into standards and analyze student work using the standards and rubrics. Teachers are now thinking more about what they want students to learn and how they are going to get there. And what about the impact on student learning? Currently, plans are in place to track student performance for the next two years, but initial results on district benchmark tests are very promising.

During each site visit, the appreciation grew for what each organization brings to the partnership.

NEXT STEPS

With one year completed and visible signs of progress, SEDL and Georgetown County School District staff are beginning to look to the future. The work of the second year will center on

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REAL-TIME LEARNING, REAL-WORLD TEACHING

UNIVERSITY TEAMS WITH SCHOOL DISTRICT TO IMPROVE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

By Steven Koch and Terry Borg

At 4 o'clock on a Monday afternoon, more than an hour after students have left, 30 teachers gather in a classroom at the district office to discuss leadership styles in a seminar co-taught by a Northern Illinois University professor and a district administrator. Across the hall, another cohort studies instructional strategies, looking for strengths and weaknesses. For three hours, both groups discuss and reflect, preparing to bring new expertise back to their departments and students, and they will continue to do so over the next 14 weeks. This is effective ongoing professional development, and it has been taking place for 10 years.

Community High School District 155 in Crystal Lake, Ill., and Northern Illinois University (NIU) College of Education engaged in a partnership that has provided significant benefits, posed limited challenges, and resulted in a high return on investment. Learner cohorts included teach-

ers and current and future administrators working to build their knowledge and skills to benefit students in the district and to travel on their career continuums.

BENEFITS

The personnel involved in the cohorts — the teachers taking classes and the instructors who lead them — derive the most immediate benefits. As students, the district teachers study current literature in the field and are exposed to the perspective of a university professor and a district administrator as they co-teach classes. The subject matter is pertinent and the assignments job-embedded, as the instructors expect participants to apply classroom learning in real time in their buildings. They process their experience and receive feedback in subsequent classes through reflective exercises. Examples of this abound. Teachers from a curriculum and instruction class study a research-based teaching strategy such as concept attainment or cooperative learning and work with each other to craft lesson plans to use in a current unit of study. Later that week, they implement the lesson with students. In a subsequent class, teachers reflect on the experience, examine student work to see how the new strategy impacted student learning, and share stories with peers and instructors. Teachers in the administrative cohort investigate current district policy with an eye on validating or updating the language, perhaps looking at policy on foreign exchange programs or for the use of online learning as professional development for teachers. On the classroom level, these teachers might study change theory in action by working with a school administrator to lead implementation of a new program in a school, such as designing a new schoolwide test prep approach for juniors. One teacher's recent project resulted in the creation of an induction and mentoring program for new department chairs, addressing a gap in support for the district's newest leaders.

As an instructor, district administrators are able to form deep relationships with teachers taking the course, promoting a healthy district culture, and work with the teachers to connect the subject matter to relevant, ongoing district issues. As a result of the co-teaching arrangement, both the administrator and the university professor gain a clear view of how the theory of the subject matter translates into the reality of the high school classroom. For both, the process is enlightening and paves the road for future collaboration, such as potential joint research projects.

The district administrators' roles in the partnership ensure shared ownership of the experience, which leads to greater success. Such partnership programs tend to have a higher rate of completion because participants are part of a team with district-reinforced educational goals. Goals can come from teacher needs (such as a high number of inexperienced teachers forming a cohort for the curriculum and instruction class), from the administration (an anticipated number of administrative openings precipitating a cohort earning a particular type of administrator certification), or from the students (low reading scores engendering a cohort pursuing a reading endorsement).

The personnel involved in the cohorts — the teachers taking classes and the instructors who lead them — derive the most immediate benefits.

Other systemwide mutual benefits include:

- **Recruitment:** The district's participation in the selection process ensures that each cohort is full, maximizing a return on the investment, and that the most highly qualified people are admitted;
- **Academic advisement:** With a standard established program, advisement is consistent and direct across all students;
- **Relevance:** The curriculum is tailored to the district's current reality and future needs;
- **Communication:** The school district coordinator drives information to all participants ensuring consistency for the district and reducing university staff time;
- **Travel:** Travel expense and time is reduced to conduct internships and other learning experiences.

Such a partnership makes financial sense, as well. The joint ownership of partnership programs provides financial security for both parties: predictable professional develop-

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS

Are you ready for a school district-university partnership? Consider these questions:

- Does the school district have a need that leaders can't address internally?
- Does the school district have a three-year revenue source to support the program?
- Does the school district have a suitable number of candidates willing and able to participate in the proposed program?

- Is the university partner willing to be flexible with its curriculum?
- What are the incentives for a school district's teachers to be involved in this type of professional development?
- What are the incentives for the university faculty to address challenges that arise in the district-university partnership?
- What are the incentives for the college and academic department to establish a school district-university partnership?

ment costs for the district with a consistent revenue stream for the university. Districts can use economies of scale to reduce program costs by locking into a multiple-year agreement, while the university can plan on this income stream to provide program full-cost recovery, including the ability to fund co-teaching arrangements, which helps strengthen the program and adapt it to the district's needs.

Ultimately, the benefits of any partnership program must be evaluated on program quality and intended impact. District 155 and NIU have a vested interest in making the program work. With clearly defined program goals for each cohort, regular communication, and the district's proactive approach to the curriculum, the partnership creates quality learning for ongoing improvement. The partnership provides the vehicle to a stronger and long-term working relationship where program quality is expected in the delivery of degree and professional certification programs.

CHALLENGES

The District 155-NIU partnership encountered several challenges. Both institutions shared the first challenge equally, resulting from the natural change of personnel over time. With changes in leadership on either side, a new decision maker may come in who doesn't understand the original vision of the program, requiring time and effort to ensure that all stakeholders understand both the end goal of the program and the means for achieving it. On an instructional level, an individual scheduled to teach in the original sequence of coursework may also become unavailable, prompting a search for a suitable replacement of equal expertise. Again, having instructors understand where the cohort has been and where it is going is essential for continuity.

Leaders at both institutions ... focused on crafting a vision for each cohort from the start: What specific knowledge and skills should teacher participants have at the end of the experience? What is the best scope and sequence to achieve those goals?

The second substantial challenge posed a greater difficulty for NIU in its attempt to respond to the district's reality. While the literature and theory remain constant with classes outside of the partnership, NIU faculty must invest time to learn about the District 155 context in order to make learning more relevant and ensure instruction is aligned with district needs. This requires a flexible attitude to ensure the integrity of the coursework while allowing for curricular adjustments.

Administratively, staffing and planning are the most significant challenges. Staffing is a challenge, given the balance among when courses can be available, when administrators are available to teach, and when university faculty are available. Also, financial planning has proven to be critical in keeping the business model solvent with a two- to three-year completion cycle for most programs.

Both institutions face a final important challenge as they strive to continue to meet their commitment to quality for the program. District 155 has committed to providing high-quality professional development that is tailored to the needs of its teachers and students, and NIU has committed to delivering high-quality programs that are responsive to District 155's vision and needs. Frequent and open communication between partners is all the more critical with the constantly changing higher education environment. Both partners have had to adapt program quality assurance measures.

RESULTS

The District 155-NIU partnership started with a process of discussing mutual needs and expectations to establish shared goals. Leaders at both institutions participated in these discussions and focused on crafting a vision for each cohort from the start: What specific knowledge and skills should teacher participants have at the end of the experience? What is the best scope and sequence to achieve those goals? Once both partners agreed on the goals as well as a path to get there, District 155 and NIU negotiated a contract and began to market the academic programs to District 155 teachers, promoting the benefits of the proposed degree, certification, or endorsement program. As the cohorts started, the two leadership teams engaged in ongoing collaboration to respond to emerging concerns and changing needs. The teams had to exercise creativity in instructional staffing, often resulting in multiple iterations of scheduling, to ensure that the right people were in place to fulfill the original vision.

Both partners had incentives for successfully participating in this partnership. On the district side, administrators had the opportunity to work within their area of expertise with district teachers, investigating questions of immediate relevance while learning to work in a university environment as adjunct faculty. The university built in incentives within each initiative to ensure shared ownership of the academic programs and recognition of the value of the partnership with the district. Incentives include real-time experience with practicing educators, a consistent revenue stream, and a source of data for research.

To date, results for the district include improved instruction from the early career teachers in the curriculum and instruction cohorts. Steadily increasing student indicators of success — test scores and graduation rates — suggest that district teachers are serving their students well. Data from the Illinois school report card (Northern Illinois University & Illinois State Board of Education, 2010) show a steady increase in these areas from 2005 to present, with district schools consistently scoring above the state average. Additionally, three cohorts of almost 30 teachers each have earned administrative credentials, ensuring continuity of leadership for years to come. The newest partnership has as its focus a reading endorsement, which will serve the district goal of improving students' reading ability. Other results for the district include ongoing relationships between district teachers

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and university professors, a body of district teachers familiar with the most up-to-date literature in the field, and a department at a major university highly familiar with a district's history, vision, demographics, and professional development. The NIU results to date include faculty becoming more aware of the contemporary school experience and infusing the curriculum, both at District 155 and other locations, with greater relevance to district needs. The NIU academic departments have a new pool of part-time instructors — district administrators who have co-taught — to draw upon for future course offerings. Additionally, the university is further exploring co-teaching models, thanks to the investment in program improvement funded by the funding stream from the District 155 relationship.

As the saying goes, the work is first planned and the plan is then worked. A shared vision, flexible approach, and frequent and ongoing communication form the cornerstones of a successful partnership. District 155 and NIU have enjoyed the benefits, surmounted the challenges, and reaped the rewards of a long-term relationship that resulted in ongoing, job-embedded professional development responsive to the needs of the students and teachers in the district. Looking ahead, such a partnership seems well-equipped to continue to evolve and stay relevant in a dynamic field, even in challenging financial times.

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Steven Koch (skoch@d155.org) is director of staff development of Community High School District 155 in Crystal Lake, Ill. Terry Borg (tborg@niu.edu) is director of external programs at the College of Education at Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Ill. ■

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building the capacity of district staff to take over after the partnership ends. The SEDL team will concentrate on four groups: principals, instructional coaches, lead teachers, and district instructional staff. During site visits, SEDL staff will engage these various groups in learning experiences focused on the following:

- Maintaining a culture of collaboration;
- Facilitating professional learning teams;
- Developing authentic assessments to assess student learning;
- Using student work and benchmark data to guide instruction;
- Ensuring time for job-embedded collaborative work;
- Promoting leadership that nurtures and sustains professional learning teams; and
- Measuring the impact of professional learning teams

During the coming year, the partnership between the district and SEDL will gradually shift. SEDL will move from being a full partner to an occasional supporter, to a co-celebrant as the district takes on increasing responsibility for sustaining the ongoing professional learning of all staff. In a recent conversation, principal Mike Caviris stated, "When we first established professional learning teams last year, we had a great start, but without the depth we have this year. With SEDL's guidance, our teachers are having more aha experiences about their teaching and its impact on student learning."

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Ed Tobia (ed.tobia@sedl.org) is project director, Ramona Chauvin (ramona.chauvin@sedl.org) is program associate, and Dale Lewis (dale.lewis@sedl.org) is program associate at SEDL in Austin, Texas. Patti Hammel (phammel@gcsd.k12.sc.us) is executive director for student performance and federal programs at Georgetown County School District, Georgetown, S.C. ■

IDENTITY CRISIS

EXTERNAL COACHES STRUGGLE TO CLARIFY ROLES AND MAINTAIN FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING

By Julie Horwitz, Janice Bradley, and Linda Hoy

In a professional learning community, adults learn through focused conversations on teaching practices and teacher learning to support student learning. Teachers in a professional learning community push each other's thinking and learning about teaching through questioning. While there are multiple opportunities for this critical thinking to occur, it is a process that takes time, commitment, coaching, and facilitation.

As external coaches working with professional learning communities, we struggled to define our roles and responsibilities. Through these challenges, we learned about our responsibility to share tools, strategies, and protocols for learning community members to focus conversations on teaching practices and student learning. Further, we uncovered the need for all members to develop shared values and vision. As a result, we have a renewed awareness of critical strategies necessary to use in our second year of partnership with the secondary professional learning communities. Given the chance to engage with developing professional learning communities in the rural Southwest through learning opportunities and ongoing dialogue, we learned about the immense potential of such communities at individual school sites.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES DEFINED

While the professional learning community is regarded as an effective school improvement strategy and structure, it has been defined and characterized in various ways. There is general agreement that a learning community focuses on professional learning together. However, the variations consider multiple perspectives and needs.

Hord and Sommers (2008) describe the professional learning community as a group of professionals learning in community and characterize the learning community as a group having shared beliefs, values, and vision; shared and supportive leadership; collective learning and its application; supportive conditions; and shared personal practice. DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008) describe a professional learning community as "educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve" (p. 4). Fullan (2000) talks about a professional learning community as a group of teachers who meet regularly to focus on student work through assessment and change their instructional practices accordingly. The enactment and implementation of professional learning communities by classroom teachers is as varied as the definitions above. For the purposes of this partnership, we have created our own working definition of professional learning communities: time and space for teachers to talk, collaborate, reflect, plan, and learn together.

EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

As university faculty, we learned that we lacked definitions of our roles and responsibilities as external partners. University and K-12 partnerships can be valuable in numerous ways if they are well-defined and purposeful (Digby & Gartin, 1993). In successful professional learning communities, external partners help with organization, timing, and resources. The external partner often acts as a coach to gently guide the group to areas of enlightenment and productivity. When members are at a standstill, the coach can push the conversation and ask probing questions that might be uncomfortable for colleagues to ask one another.

OUR PROJECT

We (three university faculty members) spent one academic year working with secondary math educators in professional learning communities at three different schools in the rural Southwest. Over the course of one academic year, we collected data through surveys, transcripts of math learning community meetings, notes from learning sessions, and ongoing communication. We created and facilitated two professional learning experiences focused on the structure and protocols for developing and maintaining successful communities. These opportunities allowed members to construct authentic plans they would then use at their respective school sites.

The first year began with just one coach attending one professional learning community meeting at each school each month through the end of the first semester. During the second semester, a different coach took over with the same schedule. The two coaches were in constant communication with each other about their observations at the meetings. The coaches attended each school's schoolwide professional learning community (usually twice a month) and took notes to share with members of the math communities and other coaches. We also met as coaches to discuss issues that were occurring, read common literature on professional learning communities, and supported each other in our coaching roles. We worked with three schools, two middle schools (grades 6-8) and one mid-high school (grades 6-12). The schools were either on or adjacent to Native American reservations. We worked with 22 math teachers and their administrators during the year. While we acknowledge that this is a small sample and by no means claim to generalize that this is what all professional learning community coaches should do, we do believe we have an interesting story that has led us to tackle the tensions of being an external coach in school-based professional learning communities.

Three university faculty members spent one academic year working with secondary math educators in professional learning communities at three different schools in the rural Southwest.

WHAT WE LEARNED

While there were many questions that coaches identified during professional learning community meetings, such as lack of clear roles and misinformation about practice, consistency, time, commitment, or intention, there are two

overarching themes that we will address here: the need to clarify roles and to maintain the focus on student learning in professional learning community dialogue.

CLARIFYING ROLES

We had some confusion about exactly what it was we should be doing as external members and so gave ourselves the name professional learning community coach. We were intentional in this name as we believe in the concept of coaches helping colleagues to move forward to where they want to be as professional educators (Costa & Garmston, 1994). We also felt the need to identify the teacher who organized the logistics and agenda of each meeting as the professional learning community facilitator. All other members of the professional learning community (teachers and sometimes administrators) were referred to as members.

The lack of a clearly defined role for a coach led to confusion and passivity. At times, the coaches thought of probing or clarifying questions to ask. However, we were not clear that our role was to guide or redirect the group's conversation. As a consequence, we tended to be more passive than actively engaged as participant observers (Cresswell, 2003; Merriam, 2001).

The lack of a clearly defined role for coaches led us to struggle with how to effectively deal with ethical issues.

We were often not certain what we would do to help the professional learning community members to "decenter," or shift focus to student learning (Carlson, Bowling, Moore, & Ortiz, 2007). We sometimes walked away frustrated, knowing that there was a lack of talk and evidence around student learning. In a study on the role of facilitator in mathematical professional learning communities, Carlson et al. (2007) explain that to decenter requires that facilitators place themselves in the teachers' shoes. The purpose of decentering is to understand the thinking of all community members to promote stronger dialogue. One finding emphasized the impact of a facilitator on a professional learning community. While Carlson et al. (2007) clearly place the responsibility of decentering on the facilitator, we, as coaches, were beginning to believe that this was a role we should take on to help us better understand community members' thinking and to guide more meaningful student-centered dialogue.

With a goal of decentering the group, the coach asks clarifying questions to refocus the group toward the agreed vision, mission, and goals. It is important for the professional learning community members and the coach to agree that this is one role the coach will take on during meetings. During this work, we observed the need for decentering when some professional learning community members made negative statements about students. Examples include:

- "Even if they don't have the skills, they don't have what it takes to answer questions."
- "It is important to build them up a day or two before the test, let them know they are smart because generally they are."
- "Try to say it again slower; repetition is really helpful."

MAINTAINING FOCUS ON STUDENTS

The lack of a clearly defined role for coaches led us to struggle with how to effectively deal with ethical issues. We left some statements unchallenged — statements that gave us the sense that some members had low expectations for their students. We wondered if there were members who thought that some students were not smart enough to learn or that some students were just not worth teaching. We've realized that our role is to ask questions when we hear statements that are in direct opposition to what we believe is important for students. If the professional learning community members agree that asking probing and clarifying questions is one of the roles of a coach, there should be no surprise when coaches raise such questions. If we ask questions that challenge professional learning community members and take them outside of their comfort zone, we wonder if this impacts future dialogue and the trust that is so important to the coach/professional learning community group relationship.

As coaches, we now acknowledge that we lacked a shared definition of professional learning community among all participants. While we followed the words of Hord & Sommers (2008) and hoped to create a space for teachers to improve their teaching and student learning, a survey indicated that some members formed a different definition of a professional learning community. Members said:

- "The professional learning community is not a math department meeting."
- "This is a support network for improving instruction."
- "During the professional learning community, we can really share information."

These were merely statements; they were not a shared vision or mission. Because of this lack of shared vision, community members and coaches did not share expectations and found tensions arising between our understanding of what we thought should be happening and what was actually happening in each professional learning community.

We found that often during community meetings, there was a lack of talk around evidence of student learning. In the survey, 56% of respondents stated that members talked about student thinking during professional learning community time. At the same time, 34% of respondents believed that one of the challenges was staying focused on student learning. We concluded that the use of "I" was often evident and shows more emphasis on teacher talk than talk about students. Coaches were concerned about this because teachers were not engaging in critical dialogue but simply complaining about their students.

NEXT STEPS

By the end of the year, we understood that our tensions were

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The INSIDE-OUT APPROACH

By Delores B. Lindsey and Linda MacDonell


Lindsey


MacDonell

The restaurant host asked Delores Lindsey if she wanted to be seated or wait for her guest to arrive. She asked to be seated while she waited. She ordered coffee, opened her coaching journal, and jotted down a couple of questions for today's coaching conversation: As you think about retiring within the next year, what are some things you want to sustain? What holds a sense of urgency for you and the division this year as you transition?

Lindsey couldn't believe Linda MacDonell was announcing her retirement as assistant superintendent of the Instructional Services Division of the Orange County (Calif.) Department of Education. Over the years that Lindsey had served as MacDonell's leadership coach, MacDonell had talked about retirement only once or twice. MacDonell spoke of her long-term vision in terms of sustainability, transition, and growth, not retirement. When Lindsey had left the department to become a professor in education leadership, she promised to be MacDonell's leadership coach as part of her continued commitment to public service and to support her vision for leadership development within the Instructional Services Division. As Lindsey waited for MacDonell to arrive for their regular coaching and lunch conversation, she also knew they needed to write about their experiences as external/internal partners building internal capacity for culturally proficient leadership practices. They needed to share lessons learned from their success and their challenges as they planned, worked, and reflected together in the best interest of Orange County communities and schools.

In 1995, the California Department of Education convened a commission to develop academic content standards as part of a long-range plan for school accountability. California's standards-based curriculum and assessment model presented school districts the opportunity to examine instructional practices that focused on raising student achievement, especially for students who most often fell below grade-level assessments. Rigorous content standards for students were quickly followed by rigorous instructional standards for teachers. School districts hoping to implement these new standards for teachers and students searched for new and different kinds of professional development to support the closing of the educational gap.

School districts throughout Orange County moved toward realigning instructional programs, curriculum materials, and support resources with standards-based models

for teaching and learning. The Orange County Department of Education Instructional Services Division responded to district needs by providing high-quality professional development (NSDC, 2001) to personnel in 28 school districts. As districts' confidence in the division's capacity to provide standards-based professional development grew, their requests for additional services increased. To meet these increased needs, Linda MacDonell, assistant superintendent of the Instructional Services Division, hired additional content specialists who were also excellent professional developers. She saw the opportunity to simultaneously enculturate new members and develop veteran members of the organization in new ways of being and of offering services. She envisioned top-quality professional developers who shared values for serving teachers and students, especially those students who historically had not been served well and needed to be served differently. She wanted skilled facilitators who were knowledgeable in content and teaching standards. Furthermore, she envisioned these specialists as being knowledgeable about how to support districts in change initiatives focused on continuous improvement. MacDonell challenged her leadership team to find a capacity development model that would move the division closer to achieving that vision.

BENEFITS OF GROWING OUR OWN

To support her vision for professional learning, MacDonell and her leadership team explored various models. They looked for models that would provide the division with the capacity to "grow our own" professional developers. MacDonell reintroduced the leadership team to her longtime colleague, Bob Garmston. He recommended that the team explore his adaptive schools and cognitive coaching approaches to serving schools' professional development needs. These models were perfect fits and provided a way to begin the work on academic standards implementation.

In the early stages, MacDonell tried to put the vision of excellence out front for all to see. However, she had been unable to communicate her personal passion for the vision in a way that staff could internalize. During a division retreat to introduce adaptive schools and cognitive coaching as models for capacity development, she agreed to be coached publicly by one of the retreat trainers. During the coaching session, she revealed her vision, passion, and concerns about serving historically underserved students. She voiced her desire for professional efficacy for all involved in creating change in how all students must be well-served, especially those identified as underserved. The audience was spellbound as they listened to MacDonell reveal her thinking about the well-trained staff and her vision for this work. She shared that her deepest passion was to focus the division's work on student achievement. Hearing her story, many in the room experienced a breakthrough in their own thinking about the power of this vision and the potential for reflective inquiry. Many staff members had tears in their

ROLES OF EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL PARTNERS

External partners

- Offer and develop expertise in:
  - Adaptive schools
  - Cognitive coaching
  - Cultural proficiency

Instructional Services Division

- Build internal models of service and delivery as external partners
- Develop culturally proficient professional learning practices

Local districts and schools

- Deliver culturally proficient professional learning practices and services for internal development
- Focus on teacher development and student growth

eyes by the end of the coaching session.

As the leadership team continued to work with Garmston, the desired outcome for the implementation of the professional learning models became clearer. The outcome of "external services focused on building internal capacity" would result in changes in behaviors for the division managers and program coordinators from "stand-and-deliver" highly skilled consultants to highly skilled professional developers who would facilitate, coach, and present based on the needs of the schools and communities they served. This outcome was a major shift in professional development strategies for members of the division. The feedback and responses to the first sessions were mixed and encouraging. However; one thing was very clear: While the division was using external partners to build its own internal capacity, members of the division were the external partners serving to build internal capacity of the local districts and schools as indicated in the figure above. One of the benefits of working with external partners is the expertise and validity they bring for committing to the work. When the authors of well-known books are presenters and facilitators, staff accepts the content. We also found an added bonus in working directly with experts from the field: Staff members became extensions of those experts as we served our local districts and schools. We had immediate access to our external partners, as did our clients. The personal connection to these experts gave us validity and expertise in our local context. The journey toward achieving a vision for supporting all teachers to teach all students had begun.

BENEFITS OF DOING OUR OWN WORK FIRST: THE INSIDE-OUT APPROACH

The original focus of MacDonell's vision was to develop a supportive delivery system for standards-based instruction. As the accountability programs and pressures increased for districts, the focus for the division work moved to serving underperforming schools. MacDonell realized division managers needed an inclusive and equitable model, or lens, through which to examine their new work. With this shift in emphasis on students who had traditionally not been served well, the division's work evolved to include the conceptual frame of cultural proficiency. Kikanza Nuri, a leading voice in organization development and cultural proficiency, worked with MacDonell to give support staff an introduction to cultural proficiency tools while cultural proficiency authors and experts Randall and Delores Lindsey introduced the tools at the division's retreat the following year. The facilitators focused on individual awareness of beliefs and values, organizational policies and procedures within the division, and cross-culturally with the schools and communities the division served. Division members embraced culturally proficient practices as a mind-set for examining their work with schools and districts. They were willing to self-assess long-held values and beliefs about who is well-served by traditional educational practices. Through skillful facilitation of dialogue and reflection (Garmston & Wellman, 1999), members of the division were able to confront deeply held assumptions and use breakthrough coaching techniques (Lindsey, Martinez, & Lindsey, 2007) to mediate new thinking and implement new behaviors in service of their districts.

Districts began requesting services specifically focused on serving students' diverse needs and addressing the achievement gap graphically demonstrated by statewide assessment data. As division members served districts using the new strategies of adaptive schools, cognitive coaching, and cultural proficiency, they reported developing a common language, learning to listen at deeper levels, reflecting on their own values, and engaging in collaborative work that was making a difference in schools.

BENEFITS OF TIME TOGETHER THROUGH RETREATS, REFLECTIONS, AND RESULTS

At annual retreats, external facilitators provided supportive learning environments for instructional division members to use strategies from book studies about cultural proficiency. Members used strategies for personal reflection, goal setting, crafting breakthrough questions, designing action plans, and assessing progress in developing culturally proficient practices.

As division members and the leadership team examined the results of their ongoing professional learning, they observed that inclusive goals and activities became the outcome of their work with schools and districts. They also required well-designed agen-

LESSONS LEARNED USING NSDC'S STANDARDS

As Lindsey and MacDonell finished their coffee and prepared to schedule their next coaching appointment, they spread a clean paper napkin on the tabletop and sketched responses to this question: **So what have we learned about having external partners to build internal capacity?**

Start with the standards. NSDC's Standards for Staff Development paved the way for continuing to provide high-quality facilitation and presentation skills and capacity development through internal support.

Staff development that improves the learning of all students requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement (NSDC, 2001).

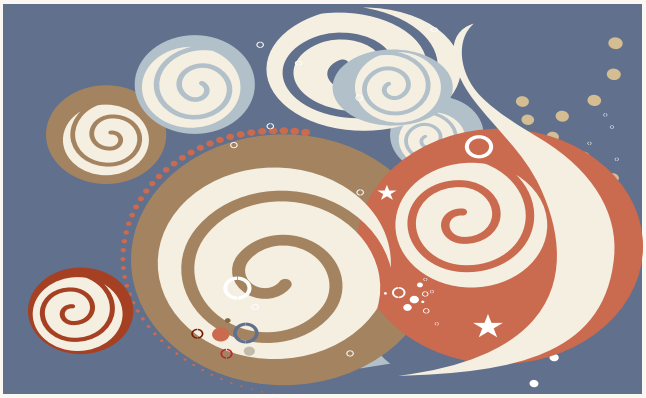
Commit to the journey. MacDonell and her leadership team were strongly committed to the long-term vision through short-term goals. The work of the division had always been at a professional level. Now the work occurs at a personal level with deep commitment.

(Skillful leaders) are clear about their own values and beliefs and the effects these values and beliefs have on others and on the achievement of organizational goals. As primary carriers of the organization's culture, they also make certain that their attitudes and behavior represent the values and practices they promote throughout the school or district (NSDC, 2001).

Connect to the culture. For the vision work to be successful, the external facilitators were respectful of the organizational culture and delivered the training in the "OCDE way." They valued the sense of professionalism present in the Instructional Services Division.

These leaders make certain that their colleagues have the necessary knowledge and skills and other forms of support that ensure success in these new roles. These leaders read widely, participate in learning communities, attend workshops and conferences, and model career-long learning by making their learning visible to others (NSDC, 2001).

Build internal capacity of the organization to provide external support. The main purpose of the Instructional Services Division is to build internal capacity to deliver external resources to



school districts. The internal capacity of the division was already strong. However, the leadership team realized the members of the division could be even more effective with a personal commitment to equity and diversity. Such divisions and other external service agencies are often seen as outsiders by local schools and districts. Therefore, we must present ourselves and our services as if we are insiders. We demonstrate these "inside" services and values by:

- How we assess the culture of the schools and organizations we serve along with how well we know and assess our own organizational culture;
- How we value the diversity of the members of the school communities we serve;
- How we manage the dynamics of differences within the communities we serve;
- How we adapt to diversity of the communities we serve; and
- How we institutionalize the lessons and cultural knowledge we learn as we serve diverse communities.

Successful educators convey through various means the value and potential that is inherent in each student. They demonstrate understanding, respect, and appreciation of students' cultures and life experiences through their lessons and daily interaction with students and their caregivers. High-quality staff development provides educators with opportunities to understand their own attitudes regarding race, social class, and culture and how their attitudes affect their teaching practices and expectations for student learning and behavior (NSDC, 2001).

das with clearly stated outcomes as the standard for division professional development. Content specialists, team leaders, and support staff practiced and modeled high-quality staff development in an inclusive and supportive environment.

Members of the division have experienced their journey toward culturally proficient practices at various levels. At the most recent retreat, several members experienced deep emotional responses to learning experiences designed by the cultural proficiency facilitation team. Members noted their responses deepened their understanding of the moral responsibility that must be shared by school leaders (Fullan, 2003). By the end of the final day in retreat, members were able to express what the personal

Continued from p. 37
journey toward cultural proficiency means to them. Many have reached an understanding of how the work of equity and access begins as an inside-out approach. The journey for each person begins within.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER WHEN WORKING WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERS

Time and money were the two main challenges in this journey. High-quality external partners are often expensive, especially over time. Weeks, months, and years are required to implement the kind of change we have described. Deep change requires a commitment to time and resources. People get tired and easily frustrated when they do not see immediate results or when they are asked for a long-term commitment of resources, time, and energy.

An investment in human capital is important and necessary. Not all organizations appreciate the need to develop people as a resource. Fortunately, this organization valued its human resources with the financial commitment to long-term, meaningful professional development. A large part of the investment in human capital was to develop our own experts. We now have cognitive coaching agency trainers and adaptive schools associate trainers. The Instructional Services Division has served as the home for the Center for Culturally Proficient Practice for the past five years. We have turned our challenges into opportunities to generate resources for our own social and human capital in ways to support our growth and the needs of the schools we serve.

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Delores B. Lindsey (dlindsey@csusm.edu) is associate professor of education at California State University San Marcos, San Marcos, Calif. Linda MacDonell (genelinhb@aol.com) retired as assistant superintendent, Instructional Services Division, Orange County (Calif.) Department of Education. ■

Identity crisis

Continued from p. 32
opportunities for growth in future professional learning communities. Our intention is to focus professional learning community talk on learning by clearly defining roles for coaches, facilitators, and members. We would like to continue using decentering as a central strategy and plan to support facilitators with creating common visions and frameworks for individual professional learning communities. More than anything else, as coaches, we commit to challenging and unpacking the difficult conversations that act as barriers to what ultimately leads to increased teacher learning.

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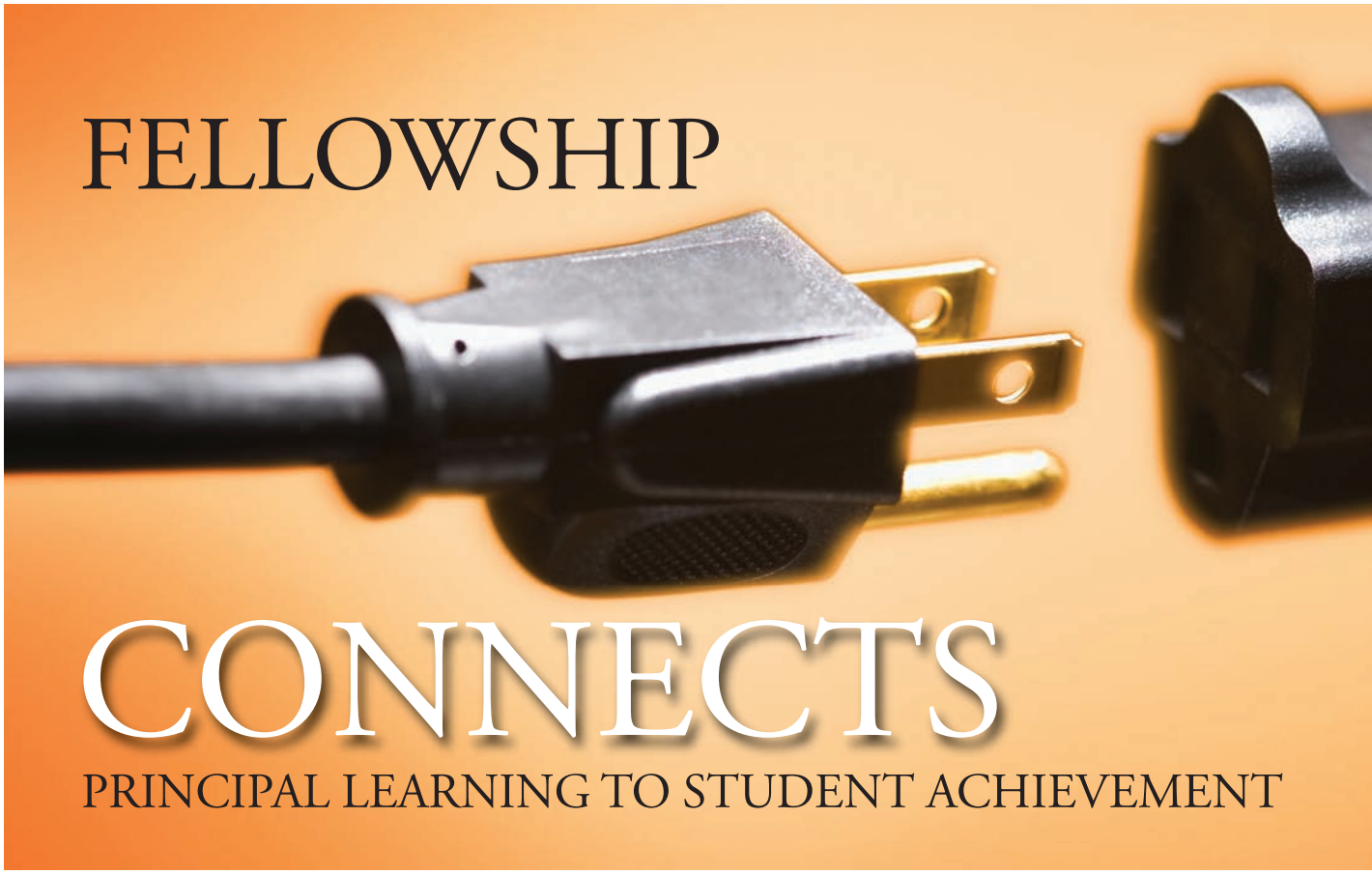
Julie Horwitz (jhortwitz@ric.edu) is assistant professor in the Department of Educational Studies at Rhode Island College in Providence, R.I. Janice Bradley (jbradley@nmsu.edu) is program coordinator at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, N.M. Linda Hoy (hoyl@wnmu.edu) is assistant professor of educational leadership at Western New Mexico University in Gallup, N.M. ■

FELLOWSHIP CONNECTS



PRINCIPAL LEARNING TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

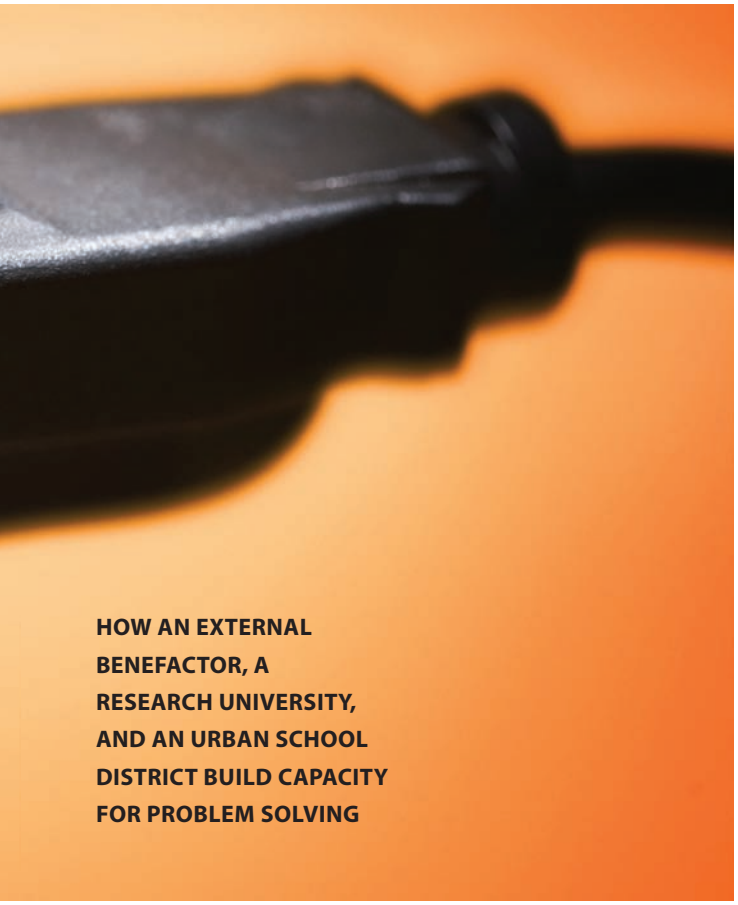
By Krista Dunbar and Robert J. Monson

Much has been written about the disconnect between education research produced in graduate schools of education and the practice of school leaders. We want to share one story of an external partnership that promotes the development of a principal's capacity for complex problem solving and the early research that suggests this partnership is working.

The holy grail of education leadership is that of the principal as instructional leader. Are aspiring principals effectively prepared for this role in the master's degree programs that most states require to obtain a principal's certificate? We think not. At best, these preparation programs require only two to three courses in supervision and curriculum development. Few programs require courses in adult development and complex problem solving.

The graduate school education courses aspiring principals are required to take are usually offered on a university campus, decontextualized from the daily realities of the pre-K-12 classroom. The instructors of these graduate courses are likely to have little knowledge of the content of the other courses in the required principal preparation curriculum. The effectiveness of these programs is often measured by the inputs of preparation, such as whether the course content reflects state and national standards for principal preparation. Rarely, if ever, is the effectiveness of these preparation programs measured by both inputs (what the aspiring principal is supposed to learn) and outputs (how well the principal is able to use this knowledge and these skills to improve teaching and learning). As a result, learning is disconnected from actual application. Some students are able to transfer graduate school learning to their practice as principals; many cannot. And pre-K-12 students are the beneficiaries of that outcome.

With the current political focus on standardized test scores as the means of improving schools, the most common challenge we hear principals articulate is, "If I can get a couple of teach-



HOW AN EXTERNAL BENEFACTOR, A RESEARCH UNIVERSITY, AND AN URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT BUILD CAPACITY FOR PROBLEM SOLVING

ers to try a new idea, how do I get the other teachers to buy in?" This is where instructional leadership becomes elusive. This is the challenge that the Cahn Fellows Program for Outstanding New York City Principals takes on as it supports experienced and aspiring school leaders.

THE CAHN FELLOWSHIP

In 2002, philanthropists Charles and Jane Cahn approached Teachers College, Columbia University, to design a part-time, year-long fellowship experience for sitting New York City public school principals who had already demonstrated effective leadership (defined as improving student achievement in significant ways). They recognized a need to honor and support high-caliber, experienced school leaders and believed that investing in leaders who have demonstrated an ability to continuously improve their schools would be the soundest way to make a dramatic difference in the school system.

Each year, 20 to 25 principals with four or more years of experience are selected to be members of a Cahn Fellows cohort based on the consistently high or dramatically improved performance of their students on standardized tests, school environment surveys, and a culture of high expectations as evinced by school visits conducted by the selection committee. Recognizing that great leaders cannot act alone, the program requires that fellows identify an aspiring principal from within their school to mentor throughout the year; these upcoming leaders are called allies. This relationship supports the notion that great leaders should groom their successors, and this fills another void in the system.

Before they can work together as a group, it is important for fellows to meet other outstanding principals in the system and see themselves as part of a high-caliber cohort. Fellows meet in the spring to be publicly honored and officially inducted into the Cahn Fellows Program at a welcome reception. The program deliberately designs experiences to build trust amongst the cohort, which enables leaders to speak openly about their challenges and learn from each other.

The most common challenge we hear principals articulate is, "If I can get a couple of teachers to try a new idea, how do I get the other teachers to buy in?" This is where instructional leadership becomes elusive.

The leadership development and problem-based learning curriculum begins with the two-week summer leadership institute, which takes place at an off-site retreat — typically, the Gettysburg National Battlefield and at Teachers College. Fellows first explore leadership by standing where great leaders have stood, analyzing the decisions they made and their outcomes on the battlefield. Over the course of the two weeks, fellows meet leaders from a variety of sectors including business, the arts, foundations, and media and engage in conversations about ethics, human development, innovation, and the challenges that leaders face. Teachers College faculty advisors draw on these discussions as they lay the leadership development, mentoring, and problem-based learning foundation.

Faculty begin by debriefing a thinking preferences inventory to better understand how these affect how fellows and allies approach their work, manage change, and supervise and mentor the adults in their building. They are then introduced to the action inquiry cycle and begin, together, to identify a strategic challenge that they are facing in their school and would like to learn more about during the fellowship.

The challenge project becomes the centerpiece of the year's

work. A challenge typically represents a problem or barrier to improving student achievement. For example, how might a faculty increase the quality and variety of student writing in the 6th grade? Or how can the cultural norm of the school that teaching is isolated work be shifted to a belief that teaching is shared work? Fellows are asked to shape the challenge into a question that forms the basis of their inquiry and reflection throughout the year.

Because strong leadership and change management depend on how effectively leaders support and challenge the people within the organization, fellows and allies delve into adult development theory and practices with faculty experts. They apply what they learn from theory to their own mentor/mentee relationship as they focus on the challenge project that they will undertake during the year through case studies and the action learning conversations protocol to investigate assumptions and engage in questioning and reflection.

During the school year, fellows and allies participate in a weekend retreat to continue to refine their challenge project inquiry focus and the roles that they will play in learning more about their topic. Four small advisory groups based on challenge project themes are formed at this fall meeting and led by faculty advisors.

Five study sessions are held throughout the year and are structured to include plenary and advisory components. Each plenary session builds on the action inquiry cycle and provides an opportunity to:

- Describe the initial conditions of the challenge, including important benchmarks;
- Identify key people and factors involved in the challenge and identify data to gather;
- Analyze data and make inferences;
- Plan a new approach with immediate action commitments; and
- Reflect on the new approach and make adjustments.

The advisory meetings build on the plenary sessions and offer a space to check in on each pair's progress, share perspectives, reflect, and make action commitments.

The fellowship culminates in an annual leadership conference held at Teachers College, where fellows and allies showcase what they've learned about their challenge project by presenting to other practitioners, including principals and teachers, New York City Department of Education officials and the broader education community. This event provides a forum for outstanding practitioners to share their ideas and challenges and start a conversation about the most pressing issues they face with colleagues, researchers, and policy makers.

POSITIVE RESULTS FOR SCHOOLS

Since 2003, the Cahn Fellows Program has positively impacted the New York City school system in a variety of ways. It has refocused and re-energized the experienced principals that it aims to keep in leadership positions. As one participant said, "It was the first time in 8½ years that I was truly inspired and invigorated. … I wish every principal in New York City could experience this!"

According to a 2009 study on the program, math and English test scores improved in fellows' schools after they enter the program on par with improvements estimated for new principals over the first five years of experience leading their schools (Clark, Martorell, & Rockoff, 2009). A recent program evaluation found that student absences decreased after their principals enter the program and Cahn Fellows' schools have graduation rates that are 19% higher than the comparison schools (Perkins, 2010). Cahn Fellows' schools had significantly better Quality Reviews scores (New York City schools are subject to Quality Reviews, where a team of expert educators assess the learning and collegial environment of the school) than the comparison schools in the areas of gathering data, planning and setting goals, aligning instructional strategy to goals, and monitoring and revising. Cahn Fellows' schools had significantly better Learning Environment Surveys (New York City mandates that every school administer the survey to parents and teachers) than the comparison schools in the areas of academic expectations, engagement, and safety and respect.

The Cahn Fellows Program activities have evolved over the

IN A NUTSHELL

For successful partnerships:

- **Begin** with interests of each partner and uncover mutual interests (e.g. supporting outstanding leaders in order to improve student learning);
- **Identify** the right partners (outstanding, experienced principals, aspiring principals from within their schools, benefactor outside of Departments of Education, university with strong educational leadership department);
- **Gather** participant data and continuously improve programming; and
- **Measure** program outcomes.

years in response to the feedback from participants. The advisory board, Teachers College faculty, and program staff meet several times a year to refocus activities and make adjustments that increase the connectedness across content strands and its application to practitioners' challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENGAGING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PARTNERS

Our experiences with this partnership among external benefactors, university faculty, and practitioners suggest that our collective thinking and commitment has enabled us to design a program responsive to the ever-changing challenges school leaders face. We would like to share some recommendations with those who may be interested in forming collaborative partnerships between external partners and schools.

1. **Come with an idea and open mind.** Partnerships form around common goals and values and work effectively when all partners are flexible about the specific pathways to reaching a shared destination. The Cahn Fellows Program has evolved each of its seven years in terms of the ways it supports leadership development. For example, in the first years, the fellows selected allies who were new principals leading other schools as a way to "cultivate the next generation of school leaders." When participants, faculty, and staff saw that this wasn't addressing the need to groom successors and instead promoted the principal as the "leader" or the hero, the program shifted the model so that allies are now aspiring principals from within the fellows' schools. The fellows now model distributed leadership and have a succession strategy and a way to make lasting change in their schools.
2. **Establish and articulate mutual interests.** Principals affiliated with the program want to improve their practice as leaders and increase student learning at their schools. Teachers College, the university partner, wants to deliver significant benefits to practitioners in the field of education. The external partner, or benefactor, wants to see that the schools in their community are delivering high-quality education to students. These mutual interests are manifest in the curriculum and the challenge projects that Cahn Fellows take on.
3. **External partners especially wish to see demonstrable results from their efforts and investment.** If the original goal of the Cahn Fellows Program was to support high-caliber principals to improve their instructional leadership so that their students can achieve, then these goals must be measured by looking at the school environment and student test scores after principals have participated in the program.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRINCIPAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. **Start with the immediate challenges facing the principal.** If we ask principals to spend time away from their schools, they must see how that time away provides knowledge and skills directly transferrable to making progress back home.
2. **Use problem-based learning** (we called it the "challenge project") as the primary structure for encouraging reflective inquiry within the faculty. Solving a problem together builds teamwork.
3. **Teach principals to think strategically about the challenge.** In our experience, the nature of the daily work of principals does not encourage strategic analysis of a presenting problem. Too often, principals respond to the symptom rather than the root cause of the challenge. Learning to identify the conceptual framework underlying the challenge is a key to finding a systemic solution.
4. **Build trust amongst the cohort by taking them off-site** and exposing them to models of leadership other than in the realm of education. External partners can be particularly helpful with this. Design activities and invite speakers that indicate that they and their leadership are at the forefront of the experience rather than decontextualized experts or mandates.
5. **Assign principals to groups** with similar challenges so they can collaborate rather than compete. Principals are more isolated given the competition they face to achieve the highest test scores in the school district or the greatest test score increases. This isolation will likely increase if performance-based compensation is introduced.

The program is designed to be responsive to the ever-changing challenges school leaders face.

After seven years, the Cahn Fellows Program has a proven track record of success with principals and demonstrable results on student outcomes. This became a reality only because external partners and a large urban school system found common ground.

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Krista Dunbar (dunbar@exchange.tc.columbia.edu) is director of the Cahn Fellows Program for Distinguished New York City Principals at Teachers College, Columbia University. Robert J. Monson (monson@exchange.tc.columbia.edu) is adjunct associate professor of education leadership at Teachers College, Columbia University. ■

COLLABORATION
PAINTS A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR ARTS EDUCATION

By Kristine Hughes

Ask a group of struggling elementary school students which ones want to give up a month of vacation to go to summer school, and you'll see few, if any, raised hands. Most students attend summer school not because it's their idea of a good time, but because they need to in order to advance to the next grade. To many students — and even some teachers — summer school feels more like punishment than an opportunity to learn and explore.

In July 2010, working with a nonprofit organization called Big Thought, officials at the Dallas Independent School District embarked on an approach to summer school they hoped would change that image and engage kids. The idea was to support teachers, artists, and others to replace worksheet-style instruction with teaching animated by music, visual arts, dance, and theater.

The new arts-rich summer school program that resulted is just another sign of Dallas' initiative, spearheaded by Big Thought (www.bigthought.org), to bring together schools, cultural organizations, and others to restore high-quality arts instruction to the many classrooms from which it has long been missing. "What's the goal of education: to assess kids or prepare them for life?" asks Craig Welle, executive director of enrichment curriculum and instruction for the Dallas Independent School District. "If you've taken the arts out of the education system, you are no longer preparing kids for life."

A 30-YEAR DECLINE WITH A NUMBER OF CULPRITS

For many years and a number of reasons, the arts have been on a downward spiral in public education.

The decline began in the 1970s, when municipal financial crises forced local and state governments to severely curtail spending. As a 2008 RAND Corporation report, *Revitalizing Arts Education Through Community-Wide Coordination,* puts it: "The arts and arts teachers became easy targets for budget cutting" (Bodilly & Augustine, 2008, p. 10). School districts all over the country slashed arts programming, to enduring effect. By 1991 in New York City, for example, two-thirds of public schools lacked licensed art and music teachers. Some cities also pared school operating hours, with the result in Chicago, for example, that the school day shrank from seven hours to five hours and 45 minutes. "Not only were the arts instructors gone, but so was the time in the school day for anything other than the very basic subjects," the report says (p. 11). More recently, the move to assess student achievement through standardized testing has had the effect of marginalizing nontested subjects, the arts included.

This long-term erosion of arts education is evident today in schools throughout the nation. In elementary grades, education in music and art "tends to be spotty, casual, and brief," with instruction in drama and dance "even more limited," according to another RAND Corporation study, *Cultivating Demand for the Arts: Arts Learning, Arts Engagement, and State Arts Policy* (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). In high school, "qualified arts specialists offer arts instruction but reach only the small proportion of students who choose to take arts classes" (p. 51).

In short, "because of the pervasive neglect of arts education in the kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) public school system, most children are given only a smattering of arts instruction, and some are given none at all" (Bodilly & Augustine, 2008, p. xii).

REASONS TO REVIVE ARTS EDUCATION

Why should educators care about this?

According to research, the arts can make important, positive contributions to individuals and communities, and the earlier people become engaged in art, the better the chance they — and civic life — will reap the rewards (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008).

Sustained involvement in art can confer much good on individuals, from pleasure and captivation to an expanded capacity for empathy (McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2004). For communities, the arts can strengthen social bonds and give expression to what whole groups need or want to convey.

Offering a perspective different from other disciplines, the arts also provide cognitive benefits that would be a plus to anyone but may be particularly helpful to school-aged children. They can instill a recognition that problems can be solved in more than one way, for example, or that there are many different ways to see and interpret the world. Being involved in doing art — for example, putting on a play or refining an artwork — can also help instill the value of persistence.

For teachers, the arts can be a vehicle for reinforcing academic knowledge or reaching children who may struggle with more conventional classroom approaches to education, says Welle, who has overseen the revival of arts education in Dallas public schools. "Art is one of the ways identified as a means of embedding learning in another way," he says. "When students create an art project, or sing a song about a subject or act or dance, they learn information at another level."

REVERSING THE SLIDE: A COORDINATED EFFORT

These and other potential benefits are more likely to accrue if children get more than the haphazard exposure to art that now prevails in many American public schools. Therefore, a number of communities have in recent years looked for ways to reinvigorate arts education.

One strategy is the coordinated arts learning effort: enlisting the cooperation of many individuals and organizations — schools, artists, local government, cultural organizations, parents, arts institutions, and others — to work together to improve and expand arts education. This work is not easy, according to the *Revitalizing Arts Education* report, which looked at coordinating efforts in six cities. For starters, getting groups and individuals with varied interests to collaborate requires leadership and trust that is built up over years rather than overnight. Sometimes rivalry between advocates of different approaches to arts instruction — integrating arts into teaching of core academic subjects like reading and math versus arts instruction in its own right — gets in the way. The realities of tight budgets and standardized tests remain.

Still, the report found that coordination can be a "sometimes powerful" approach to reviving arts education (p. 79). As evidence, there is Dallas, whose coordinated effort, known as Thriving Minds and managed by Big Thought, is an example of how it can be done. "The 100-plus partners who work with Thriving Minds ensure opportunities for kids to be expressive, to think critically, and to experience learning through lessons grounded in a real-world context," says Gigi Antoni, Big Thought's president and CEO. "Most importantly, these experiences are made possible every day, in school and out, to every Dallas child, and will one day hopefully set a standard for education not only in our city, but across the country."

DALLAS' THRIVING MINDS INITIATIVE

Big Thought's roots go back to the 1980s, when two local arts advocates began a push to bring artists into the city's public schools. As the early 2000s came around, Big Thought, by

then an established arts education nonprofit, was delivering arts integration experiences to classrooms all over the city. The organization acted as a kind of broker, working with a variety of different cultural institutions — from the Dallas Museum of Art to the Texana Living History Association — to develop educationally sound programs, complete with detailed sample lessons that were tied to what children were expected to learn in their core subjects.

Learn more

The Wallace Foundation's extensive web site offers several reports and resources on arts participation and arts education, including a brief on the Thriving Minds project in Dallas: *From Hip-Hop to Shakespeare: Dallas Blazes "Coordinated" Trail in Arts Education for City Young People* (2008). Visit the Knowledge Center at www.wallacefoundation.org for more information.

Then, in the middle part of the decade, Dallas' arts education revival effort got a new boost. Michael Hinojosa, a firm backer of arts education, was named the district's superintendent, while Mary Suhm, a longtime supporter of Big Thought's work, was appointed to the city's top nonelected post, city manager. With solid commitment from them, a new and significant grant from The Wallace Foundation, and other support, Big Thought launched the Thriving Minds initiative, which became instrumental in helping schools revive arts as a discipline unto itself, in addition to being an adjunct to teaching other subjects. One result of the initiative was that today the district requires that every Dallas public elementary school provide weekly at least 45 minutes each of visual arts and music instruction. Also under Thriving Minds, Big Thought began managing 31 of the district's federally funded after-school programs where arts instruction has assumed a major role.

SHAPING A CORPS OF ARTS INSTRUCTORS

In reviving arts education in and out of school, Dallas has had to develop a sufficiently large group of qualified arts teachers and teaching artists. For classroom arts instruction, this initially meant some flexibility, because after so many years of decline in school arts, the 140 new certified music and visual instructors needed in Dallas elementary schools were not so easily found. "To fill all of the positions, the district relied heavily on its alternative certification program," Welle recalls. Today, that's no longer the case.

Working with the district, Big Thought has worked to strengthen the quality of instruction delivered by this new corps. With Big Thought's help, the district's planned revision of the K-12 arts curriculum occurred ahead of time and came equipped with planning guides for the arts instructors who would carry it out. Big Thought also helped provide music teachers with professional development in a respected method of instruction developed by the German composer Carl Orff. With years of experience connecting classrooms to cultural institutions, the organization continues to provide schools with coaches — generally retired classroom teachers adept at using the arts in instruction — to help faculty members plot out meaningful arts integration experiences for students. In addition, Big Thought offers workshops led by expert teaching artists for staffers of cultural organizations, school district personnel, and others. During one recent event, the speaker offered guidance to dancers, actors, visual artists, and others on how to pace after-school arts instruction, how to create a climate that differs from the school classroom, and how to keep kids engaged. Then there's ongoing professional development: During 2010, more than 200 community artists and volunteers took part in this learning, much of which was devoted to how to nurture children's problem-solving skills, according to LeAnn Binford, Big Thought's creative learning workforce director.

SUPPORT FOR A NEW KIND OF SUMMER SCHOOL

For 2010, Big Thought and the district drew on what they have learned to create a wholly different summer school.

For years, Dallas students in danger of being held back had been required to attend a four-week, half-day summer session that typically began right after the regular school year ended in early June. The scheduling meant that once the kids finished summer school by early July, they faced a nearly two-month hiatus until school resumed in late August, leaving them open to the summer learning loss that has been identified as a big problem for children. Another downside was that kids were being instructed, for the most part, in the same conventional way that apparently had not worked for them during the school year. "We asked ourselves, 'Is summer school doing what we want it to do?', and the answer was no," says Jennifer Bransom, Big Thought's director of program accountability.

The refashioned summer school, "Thriving Minds Summer Camp," operated on a full-day schedule in July and centered on a new arts-filled curriculum with a special theme for kindergarten through 5th grade. Mornings were devoted to reading, math, social studies, and science, but taught through creative projects that required classroom and fine arts teachers to work together. The curriculum for 4th graders, for example, revolved around an exploration of Texas. For English language arts, children might be asked to create a quilt of A-to-Z patches about the Lone Star State, with each letter representing a pertinent vocabulary word: "i" for independence and "r" for republic, for instance. To learn about place value in math, the children might research aspects of Texas with large numbers (the populations of big cities, say, or the square mileage of regions in the state) and present their findings in a graph or illustration.

Afternoons were devoted to studio time — music, dance, theater, and visual arts, co-taught by a fine arts teacher and an artist. The four-week session ended with a big presentation by

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PLAGIARISM ISN'T JUST *an* ISSUE *for* STUDENTS

By Deborah K. Reed

Teresa Lozano was working in the high school library during her conference period, preparing for an upcoming lesson. As she searched for current information and bookmarked web sites, she overheard a discussion between two students seated at a computer station near her.

"Just copy and paste that," the boy said. "We need to get this done."

"Aren't we supposed to use quotes or something?" the girl asked her peer partner.

"Mr. Henshaw isn't going to check all these slides. Besides, we have to present this, don't we? The web site isn't making our presentation for us, so we still have to do most of the work. What's the big deal?"

"I guess it's just a couple slides," the girl agreed.

What should Lozano do? Does she have a professional obligation to report the students to their teacher? In fact, Lozano quietly approached the librarian to obtain the students' names through their log-ins. She then went to Henshaw to discuss what she overheard. Henshaw asked to meet with the students the next day to go over their presentation. He confirmed that they had plagiarized information from a web site, so he took the opportunity to review with all his classes the school's academic dishonesty policy. Moreover, one of the students involved in the incident was a member of the campus' National Honor Society. Henshaw informed the faculty advisor for the organization, who subsequently warned the student that any academic dishonesty would be considered grounds for dismissal from National Honor Society.

Most of us would agree that these were appropriate steps to help the students learn to make good choices and earn their grades legitimately. We are appalled at reports of rampant cheating among high school and college students, primarily by cutting and pasting from the Internet without providing citations (Scanlon & Neumann, 2002). We can all point to situations in real life where an individual suffered serious consequences for plagiarizing work: The national reporter who was fired for publishing another journalist's articles as his own or the comedian who was publicly upbraided by his peers for using their jokes in his act without permission (Barry, Barstow, Glater, Liptak, et al, 2003; Goldyn, 2007).

Many schools incorporate such scenarios in character education programs. The lessons encourage students to examine the actions of those who claimed someone else's work as their own, as well as the actions of those who reported the incidents. The message for children and adolescents is that plagiarism is unacceptable, and knowing about but not reporting forms of cheating is just as wrong.

Why is it, then, that educators often do not uphold these same standards when confronted with "cheating" among their colleagues? Consider the following scenario:

Last spring, Steven Nguyen attended a national conference with two other teachers from the middle school where he teaches. At the conference, the three teachers participated in a particularly interesting breakout session where they learned innovative strategies professors were researching at a local university. The teachers implemented the practices in their classrooms and observed increased success among their students.

The next fall, Nguyen's two colleagues offered to provide professional development to the rest of the middle school faculty on the new strategies they had been using. The district curriculum coordinator and the principal scheduled the teachers' presentation as part of the next professional development day. As Nguyen listened to the presentation and looked at the slides, he noticed that most of the content was remarkably similar to what they had experienced at the national conference a few months earlier. When he returned to his classroom, Nguyen compared the university professors' handouts to the handouts his colleagues had distributed to the faculty. The material was the same, except for a change in backgrounds and the names of the presenters listed on the cover. The teachers had not cited the researchers or noted whether permission had been granted to reproduce the material. Nguyen later learned that the two teachers were going to be paid to offer the same presentation at a school district across town.

What should Nguyen do? Does he have a professional responsibility to report his two colleagues to the district curriculum coordinator or principal who arranged for the presentation? Should he plan to meet with his colleagues to review what constitutes plagiarism? If they refused to amend their presentation, would we all agree that disciplinary action was important to helping these teachers learn to make good choices and earn their reputations legitimately?

If experience is any indication, Nguyen would not be heralded as a champion of character education or professional ethics for reporting his colleagues when they exhibited the same behavior that is considered unacceptable among students. It is more likely that the faculty would believe it was not Nguyen's place to police his fellow teachers. Moreover, administrators and faculty might excuse the presenters' actions as an innocent effort to pass along important information intended to help students in a timely and cost-effective manner. In essence, they might echo the sentiments of the boy in the first anecdote who wondered, "What's the big deal?"

It is difficult to escape the injustice done to educators when others type their ideas onto new slides with different backgrounds or otherwise share original ideas without proper citations or permission. As with most professions, the field of education is supposed to be guided by agreed-upon standards of conduct. To this end, there are codes of ethics published by education organizations, such as the American Educational Research Association and the International Reading Association, that admonish members to "honestly [represent] oneself and one's work" (IRA, n.d.) and acknowledge the intellectual property of others (AERA, 2000). It is considered a matter of integrity and professionalism for educators to hold themselves to the same or higher expectations we hold for our students. But in order to do so, we need an improved understanding of current copyright rules. Note that U.S. copyright law is subject to change. Find up-to-date information at www.copyright.gov.

Many educational uses of protected materials fall under the fair use guidelines of U.S. copyright law (17 U.S.C. § 107). It is generally acceptable to use material one time in a course if it is distributed in limited fashion with the original copyright notice or appropriate citations, and subsequently terminated (if electronic) or destroyed (if in hard copy). Repeated use by the same instructor or for the same class requires permission, not just citation. Fair use also tends to be negated when larger amounts of a single copyrighted source are used, or when the material is more imaginative or does not have copyright information to cite (as is usually the case with presentation slides).

What is often most contentious in educational copyright issues relates to fees associated with the use of materials. It is not acceptable to charge for services or products made on the basis of material taken from others without permission — even if the services and products are intended for educational purposes. If financial compensation is involved, it would only be fair for the original creator to have the opportunity to profit first. Similarly, it is not acceptable to reproduce material without permission simply because a school or individual does not want or cannot afford to pay any associated fees. Ideas may not be as tangible, but they are property nonetheless.

If it were not important for educators to observe copyright, then academic dishonesty policies everywhere would need to be abolished. The notion that students should be allowed to plagiarize in their work has always stricken teachers as absurd. Not only do we hold students accountable for monitoring their own behavior, but we also teach them to demonstrate courage in reporting the unethical behavior of their peers. As professionals and adult models, we must expect as much of ourselves. We need to be more diligent about honoring the work of colleagues in our field. And if we choose to remain silent in the face of blatant copyright violations among our peers, we have to recognize our tacit complicity in the act. Even good faith mistakes ought to be addressed, albeit sensitively, in an effort to prevent per-

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petuating the problem.

Consider what our behavior communicates to each other, to our students, and to the public. We are stewards of the trust and respect afforded our profession, so copyright cannot be approached as a matter of personal choice or something that applies only to students. Let's all make it a bigger deal and include copyright adherence among the ways we exhibit the ethical practices that govern Learning Forward (n.d.):

> **PRINCIPLE V: Staff development providers give appropriate credit to individuals or organizations whose work has influenced them.**
>
> Staff development providers understand and recognize the theoretical and research traditions that are the basis of their work. They acknowledge these contributions when appropriate in their presentations and writing.

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Deborah K. Reed (dkreed@utep.edu) is assistant professor in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Services at the University of Texas at El Paso.

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the students — a show of square dances, for example, by those 4th-grade Texas scholars.

The mantra, says Welle, was "no worksheets."

Ensuring the success of this recrafted summer school meant offering intense professional development to 800 classroom teachers, fine arts instructors, teaching artists, school principals, and others. It took place over two days last June in a large Dallas high school. The attendees participated in what Binford calls "project-based learning 101" — learning the principles of the project technique, how to apply it, and why it could benefit children. Later in the day, classroom teachers, fine art instructors, and others met separately with curriculum writers to get up to speed on the curriculum and their specific roles in teaching it. There was instruction in administrative procedures as well as team-building exercises, as fine arts and academic teachers, accustomed to working alone, learned to work in tandem.

Equipped with their learning experiences, the teachers and artists dispersed to the 22 school buildings that housed the July program. More than 7,000 students took part, and a mark of the program's draw was that a sizeable portion of them did not have to attend. In addition to struggling students, Welle says, the program attracted children whose families were looking for sound, safe, vacation-time opportunities for their youngsters.

Now, Dallas is gearing up for summer 2011 and applying lessons it learned during the kickoff year. This time, for example, organizers plan to offer the professional development earlier and to make it more of an exercise in team-building by basing it at the individual schools where the camps will take place.

Whatever kinks still need ironing out, however, Welle believes that a major accomplishment of July 2010 was its proof that a summer school with art at its center could be more than drudgery for children. "I told the community artists that if nothing else, I'd like the kids to leave at 5 p.m. so excited about what they were doing that they couldn't wait until they came back," he says. "It's amazing how they took that to heart."

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Kristine Hughes is a freelance writer based in Plano, Texas.

HOW TO BE *a* WISE CONSUMER *of* COACHING

STRATEGIES TEACHERS CAN USE TO MAXIMIZE COACHING'S BENEFITS

By David Yopp, Elizabeth A. Burroughs, Jennifer Luebeck, Clare Heidema, Arlene Mitchell, and John Sutton

Instructional coaching is gaining popularity as a school-based effort to increase teacher effectiveness and student achievement. A coach can be broadly defined as a person who works collaboratively with a teacher to improve that teacher's practice and content knowledge, with the ultimate goal of affecting student achievement.

By its very nature, coaching requires effort from both the coach and teacher. Because instructional coaching is collaborative rather than directive, it will be most effective when teachers share responsibility for the outcomes. In our work with coaching in schools, we've observed behaviors that make teachers effective consumers of coaching.

Effective coaching requires feedback. An effective consumer of coaching asks the coach for targeted feedback.

One mathematics coach recalled beginning a post-lesson conference by asking, "Do you want some feedback from me?" The teacher said no, and the coach was left wondering what to do next. In another instance, a coach asked a teacher in a prelesson conference what she would like the coach to look for. The teacher said, "Anything. Any advice would be helpful." In a third case, when asked what she would like the coach to look for, the teacher responded that she'd recently tried to get more students responding to her high-level, open-ended mathematics questions. "Would you watch my questioning strategies and student reactions to help me improve this aspect of my teaching?" she asked.

The teachers in the first two scenarios were not being good consumers of coaching. Because the coach in the first scenario was working with Knight's (2007) concept of choice and respected the teacher's right to refuse feedback, the coaching session was essentially over when the teacher said no.

The second teacher could have contributed more to the optimal coaching situation. While the coach appreciated the teacher's openness, the coach was left wondering what

observations would be most helpful. The coach might point out aspects of teaching the teacher felt she was already good at, possibly offending the teacher and reducing the coaching session's effectiveness.

The third teacher exhibited traits of a good consumer of coaching. The coach knew exactly what the teacher wanted to work on, and the teacher and coach had several coaching sessions in which questioning strategies were the focus. The coach was able to help the teacher increase her wait time, develop more challenging content-focused questions, and incorporate strategies to ensure that the majority of students were engaged in important mathematical thinking.

Coaching is a reflective process. An effective consumer of coaching is open to reflection and is an active participant in the reflective process.

A coach asked a teacher during a post-lesson conference, "How do you think it went?" and the teacher answered, "Fine." The coach asked if there was anything that the teacher had hoped would go better, and the teacher said no. The coach then asked if the teacher would like some feedback, but the teacher appeared to have already disengaged from this reflective opportunity.

In a session with a different teacher, when the coach asked the teacher how she felt it went, the teacher said she felt it went well but was concerned that the students didn't really comprehend how the use of manipulatives in the mathematics lesson demonstrated the meaning of addition of fractions. The coach reported, "We engaged in a rich conversation about what we thought the students did learn and ways to plan lessons that focused students on the purpose of the lesson. We also developed formative assessments that would help us monitor students' understanding the next time the lesson was taught. It was a collaborative process where the teacher and I shared ideas and cooperatively developed a more effective lesson."

These two examples demonstrate the importance of reflection. Reflection differs from feedback. Reflection describes a cooperative process between teacher and coach. This might occur during a prelesson conference when a teacher and coach discuss the purpose of an upcoming lesson the coach will observe or reflect on what important content they expect students to learn. Does the lesson involve discovery learning? Will the teacher use direct instruction? What difficulties does the teacher anticipate students will encounter?

Knight (2007) and Hull, Balka, and Miles (2009) discuss the importance of reflection in adopting new teaching strategies and in monitoring, evaluating, and modifying them. These discussions target the coach's role in helping teachers to reflect. Yet, for reflection to take place, the teacher must participate in the process and share responsibility with the coach for setting the stage for reflection.

During the post-lesson conference, a coach might ask the teacher, "How do you think it went?" — a reflective question suggested by West and Staub (2003) to set the stage for careful consideration and critical assessment of a recently delivered lesson. Teachers must reflect on their broad goals for instruction and communicate them to the coach. What do they expect from the students in the subject area? Is it to become better problem solvers? To engage in more inquiry and exploration? A good consumer of coaching is open to answering these types of questions.

Effective coaching requires teachers to communicate their needs. An effective consumer of coaching tells the coach what he or she needs.

During the first prelesson conference with a coach, one teacher said, "I need help getting my students interested in mathematics. They don't pay attention during my lessons, and even when I do group work, they don't stay focused. Before long, they are off doing other stuff or causing trouble."

The coach watched one of this teacher's lessons that involved group work and noticed several issues. The coach reported, "I saw ways to improve the tasks she assigned so that instruction was more relevant to the students' experiences, ways to present the task so that students would be more engaged and better understand their roles, and ways to improve how she monitored the students as the task unfolded. I modeled a lesson for the teacher, illustrating some strategies for the aspects described above, and together we planned a similar lesson for her to deliver. The teacher came to realize that the problem she had called 'students' interest in mathematics' was better addressed by asking how we could engage the students and keep them engaged during a mathematics lesson."

Because instructional coaching is collaborative rather than directive, it will be most effective when teachers recognize and share responsibility for the outcomes.

This scenario demonstrates how important it is for a coach to understand a teacher's needs. Coaching authors offer advice on how to assess teaching needs (Hansen, 2008), develop links between a coach's goals and a teacher's goals (Morse, 2009), inquire into a teacher's interest (Knight, 2007) and give teachers choices on what to be coached on (Knight, 2007; Hull, Balka, and Miles, 2009). This advice targets the coaches: What advice do teachers need?

Good consumers of coaching find ways to clearly communicate their needs to coaches. In our work with teachers and coaches, we use a survey that a coach gives to teachers at the beginning of the semester to set the stage for coaching (see p. 53). This instrument asks teachers to reflect on aspects of their teaching and to indicate whether

they would like to be coached on these topics. Teachers can help coaches target their needs by providing this information at the beginning of a school year.

Effective coaching requires teachers to communicate their expectations for coaches as the lesson transpires. An effective consumer of coaching tells his or her coach what kind of classroom interaction he or she desires.

One of the coaches with whom we've worked reported observing a lesson where, in the middle of a mathematical explanation, the teacher turned to the coach and asked, "Do you know a better way to explain this?" The coach was taken aback and had difficulty responding. The coach reported that she would have been better prepared had she known that the teacher wanted that type of involvement.

Another coach reported team teaching lessons with a teacher. She and the teacher would even pause lessons to have sidebar chats about what was transpiring and what to do next. This teacher and coach had developed a clear understanding about what role the coach would play during lessons. This same coach reported that she didn't always have this type of role in the teachers' classrooms. Her role was always based on a teacher's preferences, goals, and comfort level.

In contrast, a different coach reported that on her first visit, a teacher invited her to sit in a corner and observe the lesson. The coach took her place on a stool in back and never got up during that lesson or any other. The teacher might have been open to the coach circulating among the students and observing student work, but the coach never broached the subject.

In this last example, we could point the finger at the coach for not clarifying her role with the teacher. But the remedy to the issue was communication, and communication is two-sided. Good consumers of coaching are willing to initiate discussions with their coaches about what level of interaction they expect from coaches in their classrooms.

Effective coaching is content-based. An effective consumer of coaching is willing to examine her or his own content knowledge.

Many teachers with whom we have worked ask to be coached on teaching strategies that are not content-focused, such as cooperative learning, classroom management, engagement strategies, and wait time. While these are important concerns, such topics need not dominate coaching sessions. There is almost always a way to relate such issues to teaching and learning within a content area. In mathematics, for example, strategies such as cooperative learning that are not unique to mathematics can be discussed in the context of how they enhance specific mathematics content learning.

This point is made salient in recent research. Lockwood, McCombs, and Marsh (2010) found evidence that reading coaches improved student achievement in reading, but they did not find the same level of evidence in students' mathematics scores. They had looked at mathematics achievement scores because they knew the state mathematics assessments involved a significant amount of reading in the mathematics questions' development. This result does not suggest that mathematics coaching is not effective. Instead, it suggests that coaching should target specific subject content.

Because coaches are often trying to focus on teacher-stated needs, a coach might bypass conversations about content if he or she doesn't sense a willingness from the teacher to discuss them. A good consumer of coaching can help keep the coaching conversations grounded in content by expressing a willingness and desire to discuss content and constantly ask how specific strategies improve learning of particular content.

Effective coaching is structured and involves at least three components: a prelesson conference, a lesson observation, and a post-lesson conference. Effective consumers of coaching help coaches schedule these.

Coaches often report difficulties in scheduling the components of a coaching cycle with teachers. Too often we find that this difficulty comes from teachers being unaware of what coaching entails. A teacher needs to know that the three components of coaching — prelesson conference, classroom observation or modeling, and post-lesson conference — come as a package. In one setting we experienced, when coaches themselves did not schedule the time to visit with teachers but relied on district personnel to set up the schedules, there was little or no time for a prelesson conference or post-lesson reflection. At the same time, teachers reported through surveys that they valued being coached, and many said they would have liked to have more time to discuss issues with their coach. We have found that it is critical for teachers to ensure that time will be available at both ends of the lesson observation. Coaches are sometimes hesitant to interfere with busy schedules. By taking responsibility for scheduling coaching, teachers become good consumers of coaching.

COMMITMENT TO COLLABORATION

There is no single recipe for effective coaching, and approaches to coaching vary as widely as do the teachers, coaches, and schools involved. What remains constant is the teacher's responsibility to become a consumer of coaching. A commitment to creating a collaborative and rewarding coaching relationship will help maximize its benefits.

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WHAT DO TEACHERS NEED FROM COACHES?

Sample items from a teacher's needs inventory used in mathematics coaching programs (Yopp, Sutton, & Burroughs, 2010).

1. How confident do you feel creating and teaching mathematical applications and connections to other areas of mathematics?

Not at all confident				Very confident	I would not like to partner with my coach on this topic.	Not sure if I would like to partner with my coach on this topic.	I would like to partner with my coach on this topic.
1	2	3	4	5	-	0	+

2. How confident are you with the mathematical reasoning behind the mathematics you teach (understanding why we teach it), how it relates to other mathematics topics, and why it is valid?

Not at all confident				Very confident	I would not like to partner with my coach on this topic.	Not sure if I would like to partner with my coach on this topic.	I would like to partner with my coach on this topic.
1	2	3	4	5	-	0	+

3. How confident do you feel managing a classroom where students are engaged in inquiry-based or discovery-based tasks?

Not at all confident				Very confident	I would not like to partner with my coach on this topic.	Not sure if I would like to partner with my coach on this topic.	I would like to partner with my coach on this topic.
1	2	3	4	5	-	0	+

4. How confident do you feel encouraging student participation?

Not at all confident				Very confident	I would not like to partner with my coach on this topic.	Not sure if I would like to partner with my coach on this topic.	I would like to partner with my coach on this topic.
1	2	3	4	5	-	0	+

5. How confident do you feel creating an environment where students listen to one another?

Not at all confident				Very confident	I would not like to partner with my coach on this topic.	Not sure if I would like to partner with my coach on this topic.	I would like to partner with my coach on this topic.
1	2	3	4	5	-	0	+

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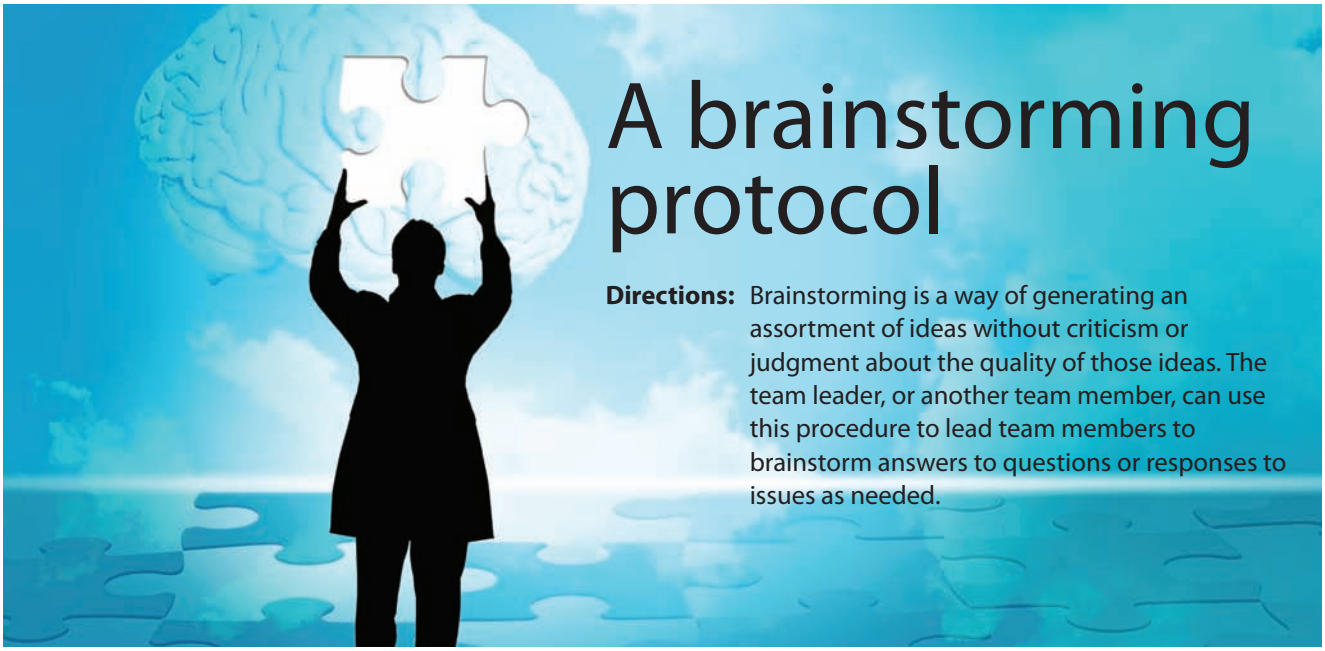
David Yopp (yopp@math.montana.edu), Elizabeth A. Burroughs (burrough@math.montana.edu), and John Sutton (sutton@rmcdenver.com) are co-principal investigators of the Examining Mathematics Coaching (EMC) project, NSF Discovery Research K-12 program. Jennifer Luebeck (luebeck@math.montana.edu), Clare Heidema (heidema@rmcdenver.com), and Arlene Mitchell (mitchell@rmcdenver.com) are senior researchers on the project.



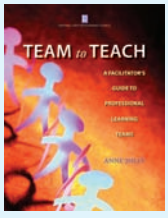
A brainstorming protocol

Directions: Brainstorming is a way of generating an assortment of ideas without criticism or judgment about the quality of those ideas. The team leader, or another team member, can use this procedure to lead team members to brainstorm answers to questions or responses to issues as needed.

1. Have chart paper and markers available.
2. Write the question or issue the team is addressing at the top of the chart paper.
3. Explain the following guidelines for generating responses to the question or issue:
   - Ideas should be developed as quickly as possible.
   - Everyone on the team should contribute ideas.
   - Unique and off-the-wall ideas are welcome.
   - Do not critique or evaluate ideas during the brainstorming period.
   - No discussion during this time! Just throw out ideas.
4. Begin with the first question or issue the team will address and toss out ideas. List all suggestions on the chart paper. Continue until the supply of ideas seems exhausted.
5. Examine team members' suggestions. Team members may now explain their ideas or ask questions about ideas that others suggested. They should delve more deeply into each other's thinking and consider which ideas are most useful.
6. With a marker, put a check mark by keepers — those suggestions that all team members agree to include as one of the answers for the question or issue.
7. Cross out ideas that team members do not think work well as a response.
8. Reach consensus on remaining suggestions, and decide whether or not to include them with the team's list of agreed-upon responses.
9. Compile a list of all keepers.
10. Continue using this process as needed to generate a list of ideas for each question or issue the team needs to discuss.

Source: Jolly, A. (2008). *Team to teach: A facilitator's guide to professional learning teams.* Oxford, OH: NSDC.

This tool is one of many included in *Team to Teach: A Facilitator's Guide to Professional Learning Teams* (NSDC, 2008). Turn to the book to develop a comprehensive understanding of how to lead a high-functioning professional learning team focused on improving student outcomes. *Team to Teach* is available at www.learningforwardstore.org, item #B394, member price $40.




Nelson


Guerra

A colleague's challenge offers a chance to improve our work and extend its impact

We have always said that becoming culturally proficient is a journey, not a destination. Our four-stage model for developing cultural proficiency is based on the notion of continuous growth. And even as long as we have been working in this area, we have always said that we, too, are on the journey and must continue to learn.

We recently found our commitment to the process of continuous growth challenged when a colleague commented on our professional development model. Our colleague, who is clearly committed to educational equity and on occasion has been a presenter in our professional development sessions, suggested that our model for developing culturally proficient educators falls short. He said that by limiting our focus to cultural, linguistic, and economic diversity, we were leaving out other important forms of diversity and suggesting that these are the only forms of diversity that count and need be acknowledged in classrooms and schools. In particular, our colleague was concerned that we were not addressing sexual orientation and the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students. We responded to his critique by explaining that we discuss diversity in a variety of forms in our professional development sessions and that we help educators understand that cultural identity is based on many factors, including religion, geographic region, age, disability, and sexual orientation. We provided examples of times that we had challenged educators who were claiming to support all students in spite of evidence that suggested certain groups of students, namely lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students, were being excluded. Our colleague acknowledged the importance of the work and then said, "But it's not enough." And he is right.

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

When we began our work nearly two decades ago, issues of race, ethnicity, language, and economics were the most visible to us. This was the time when accountability systems were coming into place and data disaggregated by these categories were the topic of discussion. We worked in schools with high populations of students of color, English language learners, and students living in poverty. We saw the inequities our students and families endured every day. Eradicating these inequities became the focus of our work. As we were invited to work with schools outside of our own region, we began to expand our focus to explicitly include multiple forms of diversity. We worked with schools that were concerned with meeting the needs of diverse religious populations. We worked with schools that had rising numbers of immigrants from Southeast Asia and the Middle East. We worked with schools that had concerns about serving special education students. Each school we worked with helped us to think about how our model could be applied to diversity in all its forms.

But even as our understanding was changing and our model developing, we hung onto the language of culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students and families. Undoubtedly, part of our reason for doing so was

convenience. This language was familiar to us and to the schools we worked with. The No Child Left Behind Act requires that schools examine student achievement by race, language, and class. When school leaders discover that achievement is not equitable, they often turn to professional developers like us who promoted strategies for increasing achievement for culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students.

In truth, we also held onto the language as a strategy for getting into schools. While NCLB made talking about issues of equity not only acceptable, but almost mandatory, only certain kinds of diversity were included in this discussion. Data on the number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students and their achievement are not collected by state education agencies or the U.S. Department of Education. As a result, most schools are not focused on equity issues related to these students and their families. In some cases, educators are aware there are great educational inequities for LGBT students but do not believe their communities are open to a discussion about this. In other cases, educators and school communities are hostile to the concerns of LGBT students. In either case, the schools generally are not looking for professional developers who will raise equity issues for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students and families. Our unstated assumption was that if we were explicit about a focus on these students, educators might not be willing to engage in a discussion about equity issues. Our strategy was to begin with the issues educators were most familiar with and then incorporate wider issues of diversity in our discussions and professional development sessions. In using this strategy, we have been able to raise awareness about issues of equity for LGBT students and families. At the same time, our failure to explicitly name sexual orientation as a focus of our work has contributed to the marginalization of LGBT students and families. Silence conveys consent. By not explicitly including LGBT students as a focus of our work, we have unwittingly reinforced the idea that it is acceptable to ignore these students and families.

In our last column, we highlighted an educator who was courageous enough to speak up against racism in her school. We implored all educators to follow her example and do what is right, not what is easy. Now it's our turn. Our colleague has challenged us to rethink the language we use to convey our work and to be more explicit in addressing the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students and families.

It's a challenge we must accept because we know:

- More than 750,000 public school students identify as lesbian or gay.
- 90% of LGBT students are verbally harassed at school.
- More than 60% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students feel unsafe at school but do not report harassment or assault because they believe nothing will be done.
- Achievement, school attendance, and college aspirations are significantly lower for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students than the general population of students (GLSEN, 2010).

We also know personal stories of LGBT students and families who continually experience the pain of being rejected by their schools and communities. For culturally proficient educators, knowing requires action. It is one thing to not act because you are unaware. It is quite another to fail to act after you know.

Our colleague's challenge is a gift to us. It's a chance for us to continue growing and to improve our work and extend its impact. It's also evidence that our efforts to make own work environment more culturally proficient are paying off. It's unlikely that a faculty colleague would have offered constructive critique of our work five years ago. But in recent years we have been purposeful in hiring faculty with an equity lens, and we have developed a collegial culture that encourages us to challenge one another in a way that causes reflection and growth. An environment such as this is essential to developing cultural proficiency. It's a journey, not a destination. And sticking with that journey is easier when you have the support of committed colleagues.

DEVELOPING CULTURAL PROFICIENCY: A 4-STAGE MODEL

Stage 1: Raise the issue.

Through examination of all kinds of student data, educators see that a lack of cultural proficiency impacts student learning opportunities.

Stage 2: Assess readiness.

Those leading professional learning conduct simulations and assessments to determine learners' readiness to engage in cultural proficiency work and differentiate learning accordingly.

Stage 3: Increase knowledge of cultural variation and surface deficit beliefs.

A variety of learning options encourages learners to investigate their own culture and its influence on teaching and to explore the cultural backgrounds of students and community members.

Stage 4: Challenge and reframe deficit beliefs.

In this stage, teachers have opportunities to explore and discuss their beliefs and practices, with facilitators helping them to shift their thinking and actions to create equitable learning for all students.

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To encourage others, model the kind of accountability that is empowering

Geoffrey Canada said in a recent presentation, "Education is the only business I know of where you can change anything you want, as long as you change nothing" (2010).

After so much debate and so many policies, why is our education system still failing so many of our children? What are we either missing or pretending not to know?

Reforms only work when people who implement them are on board, engaged, and valued. What gets talked about from the boardroom to the classroom, how it gets talked about, and who is invited to join the conversation determines what will happen or won't.

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

Are the driving conversations dividing or connecting stakeholders? Are they catalysts for change and accountability, or are they further entrenching people in fear and blame? Is mandating accountability preventing us from hearing and seeing the competing truths that exist about our students, classrooms, and schools?

Amid the spinning wheels of education reform, an essential component seems to be missing: conversations that speak directly to the heart of the issue, engage people's curiosity to uncover the truth, galvanize people, and create collective responsibility.

Leadership that attempts to create accountability with top-down mandates, rather than by engaging and connecting people, leads to or exacerbates a culture of blame and excuses. Mandating accountability, while it may sound effective, simply doesn't work. Why? Because most often in practice this approach is fueled by the same thing victimhood is fueled by — blame. And as long as that's the case, there's no time, energy, or vision left to create real solutions.

A NEW VIEW OF ACCOUNTABILITY

The long-term benefits of accountability have enormous implications for the quality of our lives and of our education system. There is a direct correlation between any organization's health and the degree of accountability displayed by its employees, top to bottom.

Accountability is an attitude, a personal, private, and nonnegotiable choice about how to live one's life. It's a desire to take responsibility for results, and for that reason, it cannot be mandated. It requires a personal bias toward solutions, toward action.

Rather than hold people accountable, hold them "able." Rather than equate the word accountability with culpability, begin with yourself and model the kind of accountability that is empowering. Accountability has to come from within. Model it and show people how accountability benefits them. When it's clear how accountability benefits someone, accountability becomes an internal drive.

While we don't always have a choice about the situation in which we find ourselves, we do have a choice about how we view or judge it. Consider shifting your perspective from 'Since this is a tough situation, I can't do it, I'm not willing to muster the courage, will, skill, energy, focus, needed to do or say what needs doing,' to taking the stance that says, 'Given my current reality, let me explore my options, clarify the results I want to produce, and figure out at least one step to take in that direction,' and then take it. Rather than bonding with others over

mutual scars and wounds, find people who are in action themselves and who will support your success.

When we become entrenched in feeling powerless, we put time and energy into identifying all of the reasons we can't do something instead of focusing on what we can do to accomplish our goals. One shift in our outlook on any situation can change everything about the results we produce.

So beyond modeling accountability, how do we motivate others to choose to be accountable? First, please don't do the following: Tell them to get a grip, avoid them, complain about them to others, get angry, tell them what they need to do and how to fix things, or tell them that their context is false. Not only do these actions not work, they'll set you back and make the situation worse.

An effective way to point anyone toward personal accountability is to engage him or her in a Mineral Rights conversation (see box below). When someone comes to you with a problem or an issue, start with step 2 of the Mineral Rights model. Use this question-based model to help the other person facilitate a conversation with themselves — to think out loud in a far richer way than they otherwise might — and create self-generated insights, the kind that stick and are mostly likely to lead to behavior change. This model is a powerful way to get anyone, including yourself, out of a mind-set of feeling powerless.

Steps in a mineral rights conversation

Step 1: Identify your most pressing issue.
Step 2: Clarify the issue.
Step 3: Determine the current impact.
Step 4: Determine the future implications.
Step 5: Examine your personal contribution to this issue.
Step 6: Describe the ideal outcome.
Step 7: Commit to action.

For an in-depth understanding of how to use the Mineral Rights model, read Practice #3 ("From holding people accountable to modeling accountability and holding people able") of *Fierce Leadership: A Bold Alternative to the Worst Best Practices of Business Today* (Broadway Books, 2009).

MINERAL RIGHTS CONVERSATION

There are seven steps in Mineral Rights conversations. The key in taking someone through a Mineral Rights conversation is to remain empathetic and genuinely curious during the conversation. Questions only. No advice. By engaging people in a Mineral Rights conversation, they identify the root of the issue, see the prices being paid, what's at stake to gain when the issue is resolved, and come up with a plan of action. They own the issue and the solution. They are much more likely to act.

While engaging someone in a Mineral Rights conversation to help them break out of feeling powerless, avoid common traps that make the situation worse:

- Discount their reasons for why they can't do this or that.
- Get caught up in their story, sympathize, placate, or rescue.
- Give advice.
- Skip some steps and jump right to "What are you going to do about it."
- Tell them how you handled a similar situation.
- Become judgmental.

Remember to:

- Go into the conversation with the motivation to help, not further a hidden agenda.
- Dig deep. The two best words are "What else?" or "Say more."
- Inquire about their emotions. Emotions give the lit match something to ignite. "Given the scenario you just described, what do you feel?"
- Find the neutral place from which you can remain empathetic without judgment.

No matter what the reporting structure may be, consider this a conversation between equals.

An accountable perspective is that the solution/problem/situation is mine: Given the long list of terrible and very real conditions that exist, what can I do? What we focus on expands — problems or solutions. It's our choice. A culture of fierce conversations inspires and instills a desire to want to take responsibility and ownership.

CONNECTIVITY, ACCOUNTABILITY

How do you get collective responsibility? Accountability and the ability to connect on a deep level with each other go hand in hand. When you have a team of people internally driven, people who feel they can make a difference, the impossible becomes possible. They connect at a deeper level.

Improving our schools, teachers, students, and communities requires the courage and ability to collectively initiate and sustain conversations that speak to the ground truths while connecting with one another at a deep level, one conversation at a time.

True accountability doesn't happen without human connection. True accountability and human connectivity go together. When we engineer environments where true connectivity and accountability are present, we awaken the sense of collective responsibility.

Despite our differences, it's going to take collective responsibility to get us where we want to be. While no single conversation is guaranteed to change the trajectory of a career, a school, a relationship, or a life, any single conversation can. It's not a matter of which program is under discussion, which mandates are established, which carrots are dangled, or which sticks are shaken. The conversation is the relationship. Nowhere is that more important than education.

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learningforward.org WHAT'S HAPPENING ONLINE

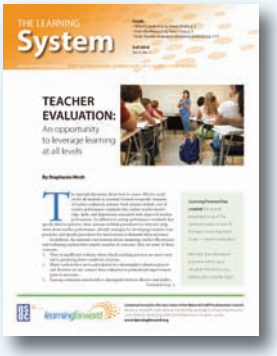
REACH OUT TO PARENTS

www.learningforward.org /news/thebalancingact.cfm

Watch Learning Forward Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh speaking on "The Balancing Act" on Lifetime Television. Hirsh appeared in two segments to explain why professional development matters and explore quality teaching. The segments were created to help parents and the general public boost their knowledge of key education topics. Share the segments with community members to introduce them to our field.

FROM *THE LEARNING SYSTEM*

www.learningforward.org /news/system



Join your colleagues in discussing teacher evaluation and its relationship to professional learning using the Fall 2010 issue of *The Learning System*. Loaded with four extra pages of learning tools and resources, the issue includes an article by Stephanie Hirsh that outlines essential questions and challenges at a time when this topic is being covered by every media outlet and explored at all levels of policy.

FOLLOW US ON TWITTER

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Twitter users can stay on top of the latest professional development news and opportunities from Learning Forward. Each day, get links to featured articles and reminders of upcoming deadlines. And talk back — we appreciate hearing from our social networking members.

A CLOSE LOOK AT POLICY

www.learningforward.org /stateproflearning.cfm

In *Teacher Professional Learning in the United States: Case Studies of State Policies and Strategies,* the third phase of our multiyear research study, the research team from the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education examined the policy frameworks supporting high levels of professional development activity in four states identified as professionally active. The states — Colorado, Missouri, New Jersey, and Vermont — were selected based on evidence of high levels of teacher participation in professional development; a reputation in the literature for enacting reforms that are consistent with the research based on effective professional development; and improvements in student achievement as measured in the 2009 NAEP. The report, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, provides informative snapshots from each state, key findings, and policy implications. Both an executive summary and a technical report are available, as are reports from the first two phases of the study.

KEEP UP WITH THE LATEST RESEARCH

www.learningforward.org/news/pdnews/index.cfm

Learning Forward's Senior Distinguished Fellow Hayes Mizell, left, combs a variety of media and research sources each month to compile this annotated list of recent news and reports about developments in professional learning, school improvement, and education policy. In addition to providing links to each resource, Mizell highlights quotes and portions relevant to Learning Forward members.

abstracts

Working with external partners

The perfect partnership:
What it takes to build and sustain relationships that benefit students.
By Joellen Killion

When educators consider potential partnerships, they gain from thoughtfully examining several questions to assess how such opportunities will further their goals. In addition to calculating tangible and intangible costs and benefits, educators can anticipate the processes that will most effectively support the outcomes all partners desire.

Partners at every level:
From the classroom to the boardroom, consultants work toward district's goals.
By Andrew Lachman and Steven Wlodarczyk

External consultants share their perspectives on what makes partnerships effective at improving teaching and learning. Similar theories of action are key, as are shared goals and beliefs. Structuring the partnership with intentions to devote sufficient time, engage stakeholders, develop leadership, and demand accountability is important.

The light bulb clicks on:
Consultants help teachers, administrators, and coaches see the value of learning teams.
By Ed Tobia, Ramona Chauvin, Dale Lewis, and Patti Hammel

A South Carolina district realized a technical assistance provider could help it implement professional learning teams effectively. Through careful planning, the partnership developed a tailored crew of consultants and a plan to meet the district's needs, drawing on federal funds and a wide range of resources.

Real-time learning, real-world teaching:
University teams with school district to improve curriculum and instruction.
By Steven Koch and Terry Borg

An Illinois district and local university create graduate courses for a local context, using district administrators as co-instructors. The benefits include a shared ownership between university and district, tailored curriculum, convenience, and student indicators of success.

Identity crisis:
External coaches struggle to clarify roles and maintain focus on student learning.
By Julie Horwitz, Janice Bradley, and Linda Hoy

While working as external coaches in schools in the rural Southwest, university faculty members realized they weren't clear about their roles in the learning teams they assisted. Defining learning communities and placing student learning at the center helped coaches to see their responsibilities and better plan for the ongoing partnership.

The inside-out approach.
By Delores B. Lindsey and Linda MacDonell

Central office staff members in California districts, challenged by the state's standards and the need to serve all students, called in outside expertise to build professional capacity. District staff were better able to serve as consultants to school-level staff when they became the internal experts on critical topics.

Fellowship connects principal learning to student achievement:
How an external benefactor, a research university, and an urban school district build capacity for problem solving.
By Krista Dunbar and Robert J. Monson

Through the generosity of local philanthropists, several New York City principals participate in a fellowship program that increases their understanding of leadership and engages them, along with aspiring leaders from their schools, in real-world inquiry projects designed to answer pressing challenges for their students.

Collaboration paints a bright future for arts education.
By Kristine Hughes

Educators in Dallas, Texas, are working to revitalize arts education through summer learning for students and professional development that helps teachers infuse arts learning throughout the curriculum. Coordinated efforts of many partners in arts education are one element to the success of such programs.
Sponsored by The Wallace Foundation.

coming up in April 2011 *JSD*: Professional learning journeys

columns

features

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**.

@ learning forward

Learning Forward blog now available through *Education Week*

Thanks to a valuable new partnership with *Education Week*, Learning Forward's blog is now published through the *Teacher* magazine web site. "We are delighted to have been invited by *Education Week* to pursue this collaboration. We view this as an important opportunity to exchange ideas with important members of our profession," said Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh.

The blog, now titled "Learning Forward's PD Watch" and available at **http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning_forwards_pd_watch**, will also be accessible through **www.learningforward.org**. Those who wish to comment on entries must do so through the *Teacher* magazine web site.

"Through this opportunity, we can influence and be influenced by others who do not have professional learning as the singular focus of their work," said Hirsh.

Learning Forward will continue to publish blog postings with the intention that the highlighted topics and issues raise concerns, inspire debate, and motivate action. Hirsh is excited to hear from members and nonmembers alike through the blogosphere. "Tell us what you want to see us address, and let us know when we fail to achieve our goal," she said. "We look forward to hearing from you and want to provide a valuable online forum for interaction and learning."

VISIT
http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning_forwards_pd_watch
AND **www.learningforward.org**

LEARNING FORWARD 2011 CALENDAR

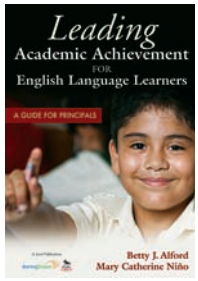
Feb. 28	Deadline to apply for the Learning Forward Academy Class of 2012. www.learningforward.org/opportunities/academy.cfm
March 15	Apply to join the next cohort of Learning School Alliance schools. www.learningforward.org/alliance/index.cfm
April 1	Deadline for Awards nominations. www.learningforward.org/getinvolved/awards.cfm
July 17-20	2011 Summer Conference for Teacher Leaders and the Administrators Who Support Them, Indianapolis, Ind.

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 is an easy reference for faculty and team meetings to build bridges between 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.

Let Learning Forward and its members be your partners in education

on board
MARK DIAZ

Well, howdy, partner! There's my Learning Forward welcome, Texas style. Since this is my first column as president of Learning Forward and I am from Texas, I didn't want to confound stereotypes in this partner-focused issue.

Here's my angle on partners. I consider a partner an ally that works hand in hand with schools and districts as we improve our educational learning so every student achieves. Such an ally brings to the table skills, resources, and a genuine desire to have our best interests in mind. An ally challenges our current thinking, celebrates successes with our campus or district, and is troubled when the successes don't happen as planned.

I know partners are allies in working to achieve Learning Forward's purpose when I hear about external consultants NOT taking jobs or contracts because they are one-time events that they know will not have a deep impact on how we do our jobs. It is also refreshing to hear that more and more leaders no longer call professional development providers asking them to "do a workshop" for two hours on our staff development day.

A few years ago, I had a conversation with a colleague in which I was lamenting about the lack of time to learn. I was astounded that she spent at least 30 minutes a day in her office reading the latest *JSD* or other professional journal, article, or book. I realized that I made excuses to not learn, and that I chose to be swept up by the daily demands of the job.

Because of that conversation, I came to the very uneasy realization that I was a hypocrite. If I were truly student-oriented — if I really wanted to change the world by working with those students most often neglected — I was doing them and myself a disservice by not taking time to learn to better reach them. I now understand that my job is to learn and apply the learning so my students will succeed. It was with great trepidation that I asked learning facilitator and consultant Karen Anderson to be my coach.

My partner helped me achieve personal insights that all of us with helpful coaches have experienced. Anderson was my ally, in every sense of the word. In my current work, I view my partners in education as allies who intentionally work with our school to create a community of learners. We are a long way from that vision, but are clearly on the right trail we travel together.

As a school leader, I also see the absolute necessity to establish partnerships for the sake of our school. I work at a small pre-K-8 charter school, the Cedars International Academy in Austin, Texas. I'm so proud of our students and faculty, and I've learned that the great work we do together wouldn't be possible without our partners. Whether we're turning to consultants for professional learning, or the Austin planetarium for science enrichment, our partners are true team members.

Learning Forward is one partner that has been with me on my journey in learning. The organization has been my guide in impacting what I know and believe about how we learn so every student achieves. I invite you to partner with me as Learning Forward's president and as a fellow learner. It is my philosophy that strangers become friends, friends develop deeper relationships, together we experience life and offer assistance to one another. As partners in education, we laugh, eat, sweat, argue, decide, fail, succeed, and learn together. I hope Learning Forward and its members can be your team of allies on your learning journey. ■

•

Mark Diaz is president of Learning Forward's board of trustees.

Killion offers next e-learning program

Learning Forward Deputy Executive Director Joellen Killion facilitates a five-week e-learning program focused on planning and designing professional learning that maximizes results for educators and students. Learn strategies for setting ambitious goals and developing learning plans that produce meaningful outcomes and hold all stakeholders accountable for results. Participants will develop and share learning plans with colleagues during live interactive sessions and weekly discussions.

"Planning Effective Professional Learning" begins Feb. 21 and is $199 for members and $249 for nonmembers. Learn more at **www.learningforward.org/elearning/programs**.

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The Learning Forward foundation's 2010 campaign to raise money for scholarships and grants raised more than $40,000. The 2010 Annual Conference included a walk-a-thon, where participants pledged on behalf of their learning heroes, and a fun photo event.

Many thanks to all who contributed to the foundation in 2010. Donor names are listed here. We sincerely regret any omissions. Please e-mail Lenore Cohen (lcohen@jhu.edu) with corrections.

The foundation is dedicated to advancing Learning Forward's purpose by supporting a new generation of leaders in professional learning. Learn more about the foundation's scholarships and grants, and make a donation online at **www.learningforward.org/getinvolved/foundation.cfm.**

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

BUSINESS OFFICE
504 S. Locust St.
Oxford, OH 45056
513-523-6029, 800-727-7288
Fax: 513-523-0638
office@learningforward.org
www.learningforward.org

LEARNING FORWARD STAFF
Executive director
Stephanie Hirsh
stephanie.hirsh@learningforward.org
Deputy executive director
Joellen Killion
joellen.killion@learningforward.org
Director of business services
Leslie Miller
leslie.miller@learningforward.org
Director of learning
Carol François
carol.francois@learningforward.org
Director of strategy and development
Frederick Brown
frederick.brown@learningforward.org
Associate director of publications
Tracy Crow
tracy.crow@learningforward.org
Associate director of member experience
Tom Manning
tom.manning@learningforward.org
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Hayes Mizell
hmizell@gmail.com
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shirley.hord@learningforward.org

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Turning to partners doesn't have to create a feeding frenzy

Educators guided by analysis of student data are in the best position to identify the help they need to address their most important challenges. While the first part of Learning Forward's definition of professional development promotes team-based professional learning at the school site, it does not indicate that the team is the only source of knowledge about how to improve teaching and learning. On occasion, answers to a team's challenges are not available inside the school, and therefore the definition recommends the team seek expertise beyond the school when they need support.

In the second part of the definition, Learning Forward calls for strengthening professional development through work with external assistance providers when schools or teams don't have the required expertise within the school or organization. King and Newmann (2000) found that continuous interaction of great ideas from inside and outside schools promoted improvement efforts.

The idea of working with external partners to address professional development needs can conjure two images. One is the vulture scenario, where educators view all providers as sitting on a perch waiting for the right opportunity to swoop down and get a piece of the funding pie. Educators view the vultures with skepticism and mistrust.

Fortunately, there is another image to consider. In this scenario, state, district, and school leaders hold genuine assumptions of positive intent on the part of partners. They see people who work in external assistance enterprises as individuals who share their commitment to public education. They recognize that external assistance providers have chosen to work in an enterprise that allows them to make a living providing a valuable service or resource for educators. In building their company, they develop a level of expertise in a specific area, and that expertise is often grown working alongside educators in schools and systems. In this scenario, vendors become valued partners to state, district, and school leaders who lack the capacity or time to meet certain specialized needs. Such partners expand the capacity of the inviting organization without the long-term challenge of adding staff or expense.

Through this perspective, educators and partners work together to achieve the goals in our definition for professional development. When the time comes that a school-based team recognizes the need for external help, they are typically glad to know there is knowledgeable help available.

However, choosing the right partner can be daunting. Asking the right questions and examining the answers are initial steps in the process. Examples of questions to ask partners include:

- What experience do you have in addressing the challenge we have outlined?
- What evidence do you have of results in previous partnerships?
- How were these other circumstances similar and different to the proposed situation?
- What were among the most important lessons you learned in a previous partnership?
- What will your references say to us when we check with them?

Carefully considering the answers to these questions will help guide school and district leaders to identify appropriate partners. When educators make good decisions, the internal staff working with external partners will move the organization to the next level of performance for educators and students.

Stephanie Hirsh (stephanie.hirsh@learningforward.org) is executive director of Learning Forward.

REFERENCE

King, M.B. & Newmann, F.M. (2000, April). Will teacher learning advance school goals? *Phi Delta Kappan, 81*(8), 576-580. ■