A video library — from which these images are taken — is one part of the professional learning provided by Success at the Core.

# A STATE FOR EXCELLENCE

**NEW JERSEY BOOSTS LEARNING POWER WITH ONLINE VIDEO RESOURCES**

**By Victoria Duff, Wendy Sauer, and Sonia Caus Gleason**

New Jersey has created policies and structures that prioritize collaborative professional development planning and implementation in every school and district. Teachers and administrators work together to understand the unique student learning needs that must be addressed within the school and the correlated professional learning needs of the adults.

The New Jersey Department of Education supports all districts with a tool kit of valuable resources for planning and creating collaborative learning structures that focus on getting results for all students. This tool kit was the basis for the creation of Learning Forward's *Becoming a Learning School* (2009).

The tool kit helps tremendously with the department's charge to support all schools in developing collaborative structures — even with limited capacity and shrinking

budgets. (See box at right.) But a tool kit can only go so far.

Educators clamor for pictures of leadership teams engaging in curriculum and assessment work and videos of teachers using effective instructional practices to invite higher levels of learning. Success at the Core, which launched in July 2010, seemed to be a perfect complement to the tool kit.

Success at the Core's draw lies in its video library of effective classroom practices and leadership teams that impact achievement. The videos aim to help educators create a new mental model — a way of picturing how practices can look in schools that have that have improved achievement over time, with at least one-third Title I eligible students. The videos tell a story of how effective practices evolve and how students, teachers, and administrators together enliven those practices.

The videos don't stand alone. They are scaffolded by a range of materials that encourage analysis, reflection, and taking action. (See box on p. 32.) The materials look at classroom practice (teacher development strategies) and schoolwide issues (leadership development modules) be-

cause schools must attend to both to impact achievement. This dual focus echoed the approach we advocated at the state level.

Using the teacher development materials, teachers were now able to view a lesson, understand how the lesson was developed based on the teacher's instructional plan, and practice looking at student work used in that lesson for

strengths and weaknesses in students' learning processes. They also benefitted from seeing and reading the featured teacher's reflection on his or her practice. MaryAnn Joseph of the New Jersey Department of Education, who works with National Board Certified Teacher candidates, has asked teachers to view teacher development videos to see models of best practices they could then use to enrich their own teaching. She's found that the videos catalyze conversation around specific aspects of effective practice and help illustrate NBCT standards.

The leadership development modules offered districts, whole school faculties, leadership teams, professional learning communities, grade-level teams, and vertical content teams realtime, collaborative professional learning around common priorities — assessment, curriculum, and leadership goals. In schools using Success at the Core tools, educators began to create a common focus for practice, long after our staff had taken leave.

John Coleman, director of curriculum for Toms River Regional Schools, used the common formative assessments module to build districtwide understanding of how common formative assessments improve teaching and learning. He first shared the module's multimedia presentation, facilitator guide, and handouts with all district administrators. Coleman then carved out time to help school leaders design customized professional learning experiences around common formative assessments for staff. The district shared module content at the school level with the district's 1,700 teachers during a September professional development day. School leaders report that the videos and supporting materials made the idea of developing common formative assessments seem real, doable, and desirable, and that the module's resources make the content easy to present.

> Success at the Core materials are available free of charge to anyone who registers at **www. successatthecore. com.**

In October 2010, the New Jersey Department of Education brought numerous education partners to view the tools embedded in Success at the Core and to practice using a leadership development module and a teacher development strategy. The partners — organizations across the state invested in the work of teacher quality — included the major education associations representing teachers, school leaders, and school board members; college faculty supporting preservice teachers; other education organizations that provide support for professional learning including the New Jersey affiliate of Learning Forward; parent groups; the New Jersey Department of Education divisions; and interested districts. The intensive opportunity to work with the tools equipped participants to navigate the site easily and challenged them to consider how to incorporate the tools in their own work. The design of the materials encouraged educators in a range of positions to use and adapt them according to individual and team needs. (See box on p. 33.)

The portable nature of Success at the Core, and the fact

## LEARNING DESIGNS USING VIDEO

Video of classroom instruction is a powerful medium for offering images of effective practice. But watching video, by itself, does not change practice. To be most effective, viewers must deepen their understanding of what they view and take away lessons that can improve practice. Here are design features to consider when crafting professional learning that incorporates video:

### Pose reflective questions that support individual *and* group learning.

*Before viewing:*

- What are the norms to employ in viewing? (Think about norms used for classroom visitations.)
- What do you want to learn about?
- What school/district priorities and specific student needs motivate the viewing?

*After viewing:*

- What did you observe, as it relates to the goals and motivations you brought to the experience?
- What did you observe about teacher interactions with the students? Student interactions with other students?
- How is the room organized to support learning?

### Provide materials that supplement the video.

- What artifacts of the observed work can support and supplement the learning from the video?
- What samples of student work from the filmed classroom, curriculum materials, and lesson plans can give a more textured understanding of the practice being observed?
- What activities help team members juxtapose what they saw in the video with their own reality?

### Support group discussion and next steps.

- What key ideas do you take away individually and as a group from this video?
- How does the reality of the video contrast with the personal reality of the viewer and the reality of the school?
- So what? Then what?

that it is free, further extends the power of its flexible design. Since the session in October, a range of groups have started to use the resource to support work on a range of issues including: building capacity around data use and formative assessments,

## DESIGN FEATURES THAT SUPPORT JOB-EMBEDDED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

By design, school-based educators guide their teams through Success at the Core's leadership development modules. Several online tools exist to support and build internal capacity.

**24/7 availability:** Because they are online, materials are available whenever teams have time. An Internet connection, projector, a printer for handouts, and a computer come together to support team learning.

**Easily customized materials:** The variety of research-based topics allows leaders to choose the materials that attend to local priorities and immediate professional learning needs as they arise. While modules last two to three hours, self-contained segments — with their specific goals, videos, readings, team self-assessments, and reflective materials — can be taken up to fit a team's available time.

**Downloadable resources that build school-based facilitator capacity:** An overview helps facilitators consider the big picture: engaging colleagues in professional learning, eliciting the leaders' support, mapping out use of the materials in advance, and ensuring the desired outcomes take hold within the community.

Each module includes a detailed facilitator guide, agenda, and supporting handouts. The facilitator guide names what preparation can be done in advance, lays out how long each activity will take, predicts what issues may reveal themselves as the work ensues, and offers effective discussion and reflection protocols.

**Multimedia presentation:** To further assist the facilitator, a module's learning experience is laid out in a multimedia presentation — an online, PowerPoint-style presentation that includes the module's learning goals, handouts, discussion questions, and video in the order in which they are needed in the module. This projection becomes an organizer of the resources, as it lays out their relevance across the learning experience, and acts as a "co-facilitator," supporting teams to stay focused and on track.

developing a common vision of effective instructional practice, deepening the instructional focus of professional learning communities and other leadership teams, and expanding the resources coaches have in their repertoire.

The New Jersey experience to date matches up with the findings of last year's Success at the Core user survey, administered just three months after the materials were launched. According to survey results, those using the materials experienced:
- Greater knowledge of effective teaching practices;
- More effective implementation of improvement agendas by team and teachers;
- Gains in facilitation skills;
- An increase in instructionally focused dialogue among teachers; and
- More overall cohesiveness within a professional community.
And as a result of team use over time, users expect to experience:
- Changes in colleagues' classroom practices;
- Greater team commitment to improvement in instruction and achievement; and
- Greater team capacity to improve instruction and achievement.

This early, powerful response is propelling the New Jersey Department of Education to find additional ways to help colleagues and partners across the state learn about and effectively use Success at the Core. The allure of professional learning delivered in an online environment is undeniable — accessible, just-in-time learning for teams and teachers as needs arise and time allows. It is imperative, however, for online tools to also support what we know about effective professional development. Success at the Core marries the benefits of technology and Learning Forward's definition of professional development.

This marriage brings something old — professional learning that fosters a commitment to student learning — and something new — online tools with powerful videos that provide windows into effective classroom practice and leadership strategies; something borrowed — research on effective practices embedded in tools to support educators in developing collaborative structures — and something true — professional learning that builds capacity for all educators to support all students through sustained dialogue and collective action.

**REFERENCE**

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