



In the recipe for effectiveness, professional learning is the key ingredient

Whisk one-quarter cup mayonnaise with two tablespoons of lemon juice.

Add to it 12 ounces of drained tuna packed in olive oil, one-half cup chopped drained roasted red peppers, 10 chopped, pitted Kalamata black olives, one chopped celery rib, and two tablespoons chopped red onion. Season with salt and pepper. Assemble on a lightly toasted baguette brushed with olive oil and topped with fresh lettuce.

I love this grown-up tuna salad sandwich, and I enjoy it best with a significant other and a glass of Sauvignon Blanc.

This isn't the tuna salad sandwich I always made. But experience, curiosity, and some knowledge about food helped me get to this point. And it made me think about some formulas I've heard about making sure teachers become effective. Do the ingredients all add up?

There is no argument that quality teaching makes a difference in student learning. *Teacher Professional Learning in the United States: Case Studies of State Policies and Strategies* (Jaquith, Mindich, Wei, & Darling-Hammond, 2010), the third report in Learning Forward's study on the state of professional learning in the United States, notes that in the last decade, policymakers, researchers, and

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practitioners have come to the same conclusion: Teacher effectiveness is a key factor in improving academic outcomes for students.

Teachers have often told me they know which students come from a particular teacher's class because they are so well-prepared. They also whisper to me that I should check out another teacher's class scores because year after year his students are falling behind.

Many readers agree that professional learning is the single most important strategy for extending and refining their knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practices. It is troubling that in many ongoing discussions, professional learning is viewed as remediation.

Denver Public Schools seems to understand that educator effectiveness is more than a recipe. Its new system "is an opportunity to elevate the teaching profession," says Tracy Dorland, executive director for educator effectiveness. "...This is about thinking of the profession differently, in a way that respects teaching as a complicated craft, requiring teacher leadership, strong collaboration with colleagues, reflection about practice, and constant efforts to improve instruction for the students whose lives we impact every day" (State Council for Educator

Effectiveness, 2011, p. 7). I hope more and more systems will come to share this perspective.

Just as teachers need many skills for their complex profession, chefs need many skills to run a successful restaurant. It is through learning — that is, experimentation, making mistakes, cooking and reflecting with friends, taking courses, getting diners' feedback, reading books, and enhancing recipes — that a chef becomes most effective. Does that mix of ingredients remind you of anything?

In many ways, I'm still learning. Would you please try the recipes I'm offering, and tell me how they work for you? I want to make sure we're all as effective as we can be.

Buen provecho.



REFERENCES

Jaquith, A., Mindich, D., Wei, R.C., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2010, December). *Teacher professional learning in the United States: Case studies of state policies and strategies*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

State Council for Educator Effectiveness. (2011, April 13). *Report & recommendations*. Denver, CO: Author. Available online at www.cde.state.co.us/EducatorEffectiveness/Partner-SCEE.asp. ■