

JSD

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

Learning Communities

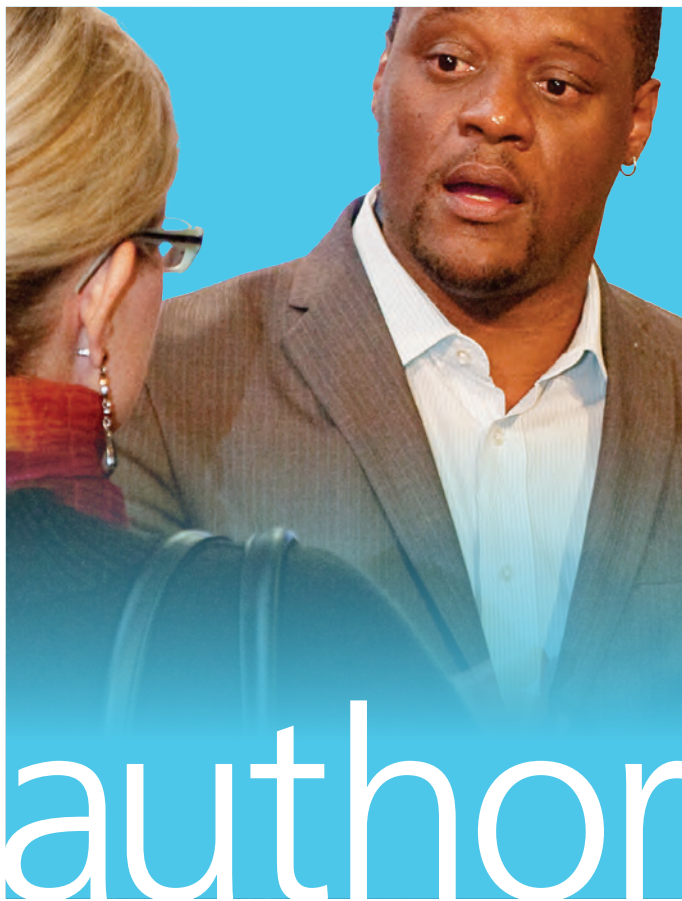
Fourth in a series on Learning Forward's standards

**Remove hurdles
to give teams
a running start** p. 38

**CYCLE OF LEARNING WEAVES
THROUGH DISTRICT** p. 10

**How teaching can restore
its status as a profession** p. 16

**Principal
pipelines
focus on
future
school
leaders** p. 48



Join education's most critical conversation.

100 experts you trust.

10 strands that matter.

Completely personalized learning.

author

speak



OCTOBER 30–NOVEMBER 1 2012 INDIANAPOLIS

Get your all-access pass now.



Register today!
authorspeak2012.com



Greater Understanding, Successful Implementation— Get It All with Common Core 360

How do we know that School Improvement Network's Common Core 360 provides the most resources for greater understanding and successful implementation?

We're glad you asked. Common Core 360 is built by educators and experts in education, and it combines real classroom examples of Common Core implementation with tools, known best practices, and teaching strategies from real educators across the United States. Common Core 360 is the only tool in the industry with comprehensive resources for Common Core implementation and the largest online PLC with over 822,000 verified educators.

Common Core 360 provides:

- Video Case Studies
- Vision of the Common Core Standards
- Real Classroom Examples of Alignment
- Learning Progression Tool
- Real Teacher Strategies
- User Uploaded Videos
- Online Professional Learning Community of over 822,000

Start a free, all-access trial to Common Core 360 for 30 days when you call us or visit us online!



COMMON
CORE 360

TRY COMMON CORE 360 FREE TODAY!

<http://jsd.CommonCore360.com> • 888.777.8019

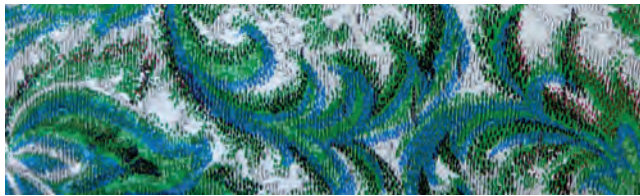
JSD

JUNE 2012, VOLUME 33, NO. 3

The
Learning Forward
Journal

8 UP CLOSE DEEP SMARTS START HERE

- Connecting the standards
- Assess collective responsibility in your school



10 A tapestry of inquiry and action:

CYCLE OF LEARNING WEAVES ITS WAY THROUGH WASHINGTON DISTRICT.

By Harriette Thurber Rasmussen and Kathryn Karschney

Using a learning cycle that incorporates data, action, and evidence of results, the West Valley School District is working to meet its commitment that all graduates will be college-ready.



16 I am a professional:

LEARNING COMMUNITIES ELEVATE TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND IDENTITY.

By Edward F. Tobia and Shirley M. Hord

Learning communities are a way for teaching to restore its status as a profession, as teachers at one middle school prove.

22 Midwestern magic:

IOWA'S STATEWIDE INITIATIVE ENGAGES TEACHERS, ENCOURAGES LEADERSHIP, AND ENERGIZES STUDENT LEARNING.

By Dana L. Carmichael and Rita Penney Martens

A framework focused on improving instruction leads to higher student scores in reading, math, science, and social studies in schools implementing the initiative.



28 Where principals dare to dream:

CRITICAL FRIENDS GROUP NARROWS THE GAP BETWEEN VISION AND REALITY.

By Kevin Fahey

Principals form a Critical Friends Group that uses structured conversation and skilled facilitation to learn about leadership practice directly connected to the real issues facing them.



features

43 Rebel with a cause:

A PIONEER IN THE FIELD REFLECTS ON THE EVOLUTION OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES.

By Carlene U. Murphy

From her start as director of staff development in 1978, the author tracks an evolving field and her quest for effective professional learning.



48 Principals in the pipeline:

DISTRICTS CONSTRUCT A FRAMEWORK TO DEVELOP SCHOOL LEADERSHIP.

By Pamela Mendels

Six school districts are participating in an initiative funded by The Wallace Foundation to ensure that a large corps of school leaders is properly trained, hired, and developed on the job.

This article is sponsored by The Wallace Foundation.



32 Team check-up:

USE 4 GOALS TO ASSESS A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY'S EFFECTIVENESS.

By Daniel R. Moirao, Susan C. Morris, Victor Klein, and Joyce W. Jackson

Four professional development coaches outline key goals that help four school districts determine whether their professional learning communities are working.

38 Give teams a running start:

TAKE STEPS TO BUILD SHARED VISION, TRUST, AND COLLABORATION SKILLS.

By Jane A.G. Kise

Targeting key barriers can remove hurdles and energize the work of professional learning communities.



departments

4 FROM THE EDITOR

BY TRACY CROW

6 ESSENTIALS KEEPING UP WITH HOT TOPICS IN THE FIELD

- Getting results
- The teacher's viewpoint
- ELL student needs
- Instructional culture
- Fixing education
- Measures of Effective Teaching project
- How to support teachers
- Peer networking

45 TOOL

Unpacking the Standards for Professional Learning.

53 COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

BY SUSAN SCOTT

A shift in perspective can change our attitudes and our outcomes.

55 CULTURAL PROFICIENCY

BY SARAH W. NELSON
AND PATRICIA L. GUERRA

Tap into educators' sense of purpose to create equitable classrooms and schools.

57 learningforward.org

Site highlights.

58 ABSTRACTS

for June 2012 *JSD*

60 @ LEARNING FORWARD

NEWS AND NOTES

- Texas team wins Shirley Hord Award
- On Board: Kenneth Salim looks at learning communities across professions
- Learning Forward Foundation awards grants
- Learning Forward calendar

64 FROM THE DIRECTOR

BY STEPHANIE HIRSH



As learning communities mature, collaboration skills matter more than ever

Learning communities are moving beyond their adolescent years, and you can see their evolution in education literature, in practice, and in the Standards for Professional Learning.

The earlier Standards for Staff Development (NSDC, 2001) included Collaboration and Learning Communities. Both emphasized the process and structure of learning collaboratively. For example, the 2001 Learning Communities standard stated, “Staff development that improves the learning of all students organizes

adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district” (NSDC, 2001). The 2011 version states, “Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning

communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment” (Learning Forward, 2011).

And yet, even as schools and teams move to enact learning communities more deeply as described in the newer standard, the individuals within those

teams are presumed to be working together effectively. That means that those who participate in learning teams, Critical Friends Groups, professional learning communities — wherever they learn intentionally and collaboratively — must still attend to the basics of collaboration. Those leaders and facilitators who create cultures that nurture the communities, even as they push learners to connect student achievement and sustained continuous improvement to the work they do daily in teams, have to keep an eye on how adults work together to ensure that their efforts are productive.

The current Learning Communities standard recognizes this when it states, “Learning community members strive to refine their collaboration, communication, and relationship skills to work within and across both internal and external systems to support student learning. They develop norms of collaboration and relational trust and employ processes and structures that unleash expertise and strengthen capacity to analyze, plan, implement, support, and evaluate their practice” (Learning Forward, 2011).

A lot of important work is packed into those two sentences, and the articles in this issue offer examples of teams working at all levels, developing and practicing the collaboration skills they need as they accomplish their shared goals for students. Moving from a profession whose individuals were steeped in isolation to one whose

participants are willing to be vulnerable, share expertise, and confront challenges within and beyond the school’s doors, as Ed Tobia and Shirley Hord write about on p. 16, requires the right “relational skills.” Kevin Fahey (p. 28) stresses how important protocols were in ensuring that a network of principals collaborated intentionally. Jane Kise emphasizes important elements and skills for collaboration in her article on p. 38.

In other articles, the use of such skills are more implicit, and for a delightful reflection on how far learning communities and the field of professional learning have evolved, turn to Carlene Murphy’s article on p. 43.

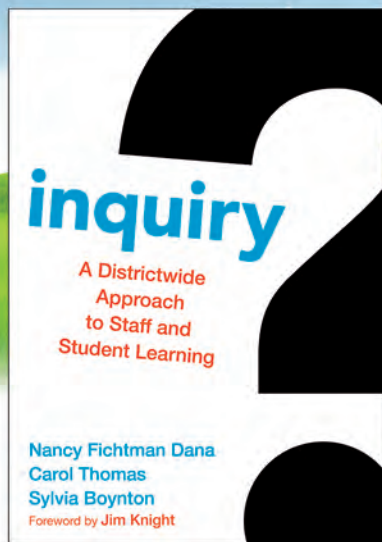
It’s exciting to track the field’s growth, most importantly because of the results that growth creates for students. We know so much more about what is required for effective adult learning. As we shift our emphasis to deep learning, let’s not leave process behind. Learning communities — in fact, deep professional learning in any form — require us to focus on both.

REFERENCES

- Learning Forward. (2011).** *Standards for Professional Learning*. Oxford, OH: Author.
- NSDC. (2001).** *NSDC’s Standards for Staff Development*. Oxford, OH: Author. ■

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

Summer Reading Essentials

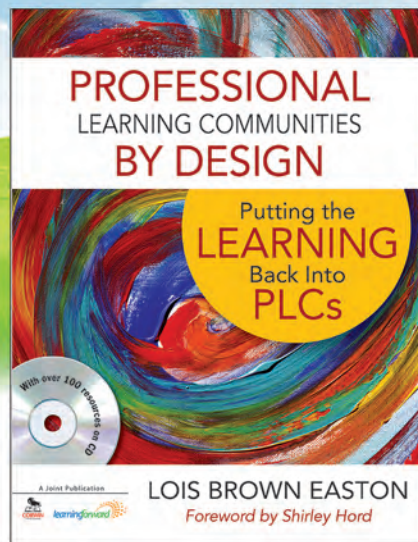


Inquiry: A Districtwide Approach to Staff and Student Learning

Nancy Fichtman Dana,
Carol Thomas, & Sylvia Boynton

This book, through its inquiry model, helps districts define, develop, and implement a systematic inquiry-based process with a laser-like focus on adult and student learning. The authors' award-winning school improvement program, featured in the text, offers a fresh look at how to improve the quality of teaching and learning across a district. Administrators, teachers, and students will find an invaluable road map for tackling real-world challenges and taking control of their own learning. *Corwin with Learning Forward, 2011*

B529, 200 pp.
\$35.00 members
\$43.75 nonmembers

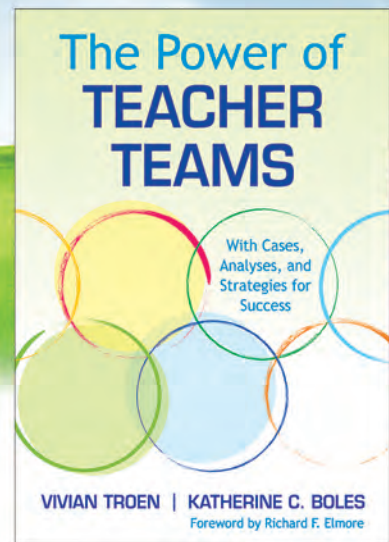


Professional Learning Communities by Design: Putting the Learning Back Into PLCs

Lois Brown Easton

Award-winning educator Lois Brown Easton's latest work provides a compelling case study in narrative form, a chronological PLC planning outline, and firsthand lessons learned about how PLCs develop, mature, and sustain themselves. A companion CD includes professional learning designs for varied PLC contexts; helpful forms, templates, and rubrics; and protocols for collecting, analyzing, and applying data. *Corwin with Learning Forward, 2011*

B514, 304 pp. + CD-ROM
\$48.00 members
\$60.00 nonmembers



The Power of Teacher Teams: With Cases, Analyses, and Strategies for Success

Vivian Troen & Katherine C. Boles

Through richly detailed case studies, *The Power of Teacher Teams* demonstrates how schools can transform their teams into more effective learning communities that foster teacher leadership. School leaders will find guidelines, methods, and concrete steps for building and sustaining effective teacher teams. Also included are online video case studies. The most important reason for building teacher teams is to enhance student learning through improved instruction — and that story is at the heart of this book. *Corwin with Learning Forward, 2011*

B516, 256 pp.
\$44.00 members
\$55.00 nonmembers



See these and other great titles in our bookstore catalog

Order online: www.learningforwardstore.org • Phone: 800-727-7288

FIXING EDUCATION

America the Fixable: The Broken Promise of American Education
The Atlantic, 2012

In this series, *The Atlantic* covers aspects of public education and how to reform the system with reports from a wide variety of experts in the field, including Michael Fullan



on "What America can learn from Ontario's education success"; Randi Weingarten on "Picking up the pieces of No Child Left Behind"; and Jeffrey Mirel and Simona Goldin on "Alone in the classroom: Why teachers are too isolated."

www.theatlantic.com/special-report/america-fixable

GETTING RESULTS

Beyond "Job-Embedded": Ensuring That Good Professional Development Gets Results
National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, March 2012

Recent research has proven that job-embedded professional development can improve instruction and student learning if there is an infrastructure in place to support, oversee, and reinforce it. In this report, the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching outlines how it uses TAP: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement to ensure that job-embedded learning results in student academic growth. The step-by-step process includes targeting specific student needs; selecting and field-testing classroom strategies; learning new strategies in cluster group meetings; providing follow-up coaching to every teacher; and collecting and analyzing student results.

www.niet.org/niet-newsroom/niet-features/niet-report-how-to-ensure-that-good-professional-development-gets-results

INSTRUCTIONAL CULTURE

Greenhouse Schools: How Schools Can Build Cultures Where Teachers and Students Thrive
TNTP, 2012

Greenhouse Schools explains how feedback and other components of instructional culture create schools where great teachers want to work. TNTP surveyed thousands of teachers in 250 schools nationwide to identify high-performing "greenhouse schools" — those that keep more top teachers and get better results for students compared to schools that serve the same student populations — then took a close look at what leaders at these schools were doing differently. The short answer: Greenhouse schools prioritize great teaching above all else. They do it by hiring selectively, setting high expectations, giving teachers regular opportunities to collaborate, and making smart decisions when teachers perform well or poorly.

<http://tntp.org/ideas-and-innovations/view/greenhouse-schools>



ELL STUDENT NEEDS

Preparing All Teachers to Meet the Needs of English Language Learners: Applying Research to Policy and Practice for Teacher Effectiveness
Center for American Progress, April 2012

In this report, the authors summarize findings from literature on practices that all teachers can employ when working with English language learners and the degree to which that research is integrated into the preparation, certification, and evaluation of teachers. By comparing five states — California, Florida, Massachusetts, New York, and Texas — with large numbers of English language learners, they consider how ELL students' needs are taken into account in educational policies and school-level practices. Recommendations include creating consistent and specific guidelines in state and national policy, teacher preparation and certification, performance evaluations, and professional development linked to teacher evaluations.

www.americanprogress.org/issues/2012/04/teachers_ell.html

THE TEACHER'S VIEWPOINT

Primary Sources: 2012: America's Teachers on the Teaching Profession
Scholastic and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012

With most teachers (83%) planning to stay in the classroom up to or past their retirement age, and only 6% planning to leave the field of education, the majority of teachers say that professional development is a must throughout their careers. The national survey of more than 10,000 pre-K-12 public school teachers explores their views on teaching and how it should evolve to suit the changing needs of students and leaders. The report identifies supports and tools that directly impact student



achievement and teacher retention, the way teachers benchmark success for themselves and their students, and the tools and resources necessary to attract and retain good teachers.

www.scholastic.com/primarysources/download.asp

MEASURES OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING PROJECT**Gathering Feedback for Teaching:****Policy and Practice Brief***Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, January 2012*

The Measures of Effective Teaching project is releasing reports as its research and analysis progresses. In January 2012, the project released its second set of preliminary findings, which focuses on classroom observations and offers recommendations for creating high-quality observation systems. This report is intended for policymakers and practitioners wanting to understand the implications of the Measures of Effective Teaching project's interim analysis of classroom observations. A companion research report explores the technical aspects of the study and analysis.

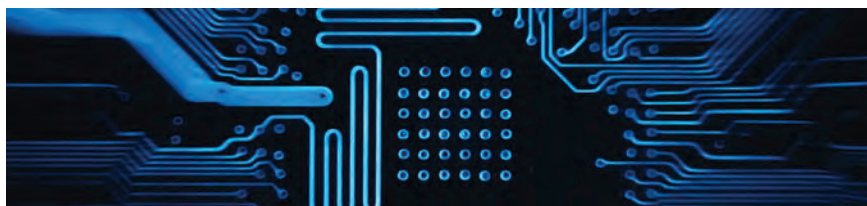
www.metproject.org/reports.php

**HOW TO SUPPORT TEACHERS****Instructional Supports: The Missing Piece in State Education Standards***The Education Trust, March 2012*

The transition from current state learning standards to college- and career-ready standards is more than a subtle shift. In this report, The Education Trust offers insights about the best ways states can support educators in their efforts to help students meet high academic standards. Key points in the report include:

- Instructional supports guide how academic standards are taught and translated into student learning.
- Teachers want a clear curricular framework, a rich array of teaching resources, and ideas for assignments that tap higher-order thinking.
- As states implement new standards, they must simultaneously provide teachers with the tools to teach them effectively.

www.edtrust.org/dc/publication/instructional-supports-the-missing-piece-in-state-education-standards

**PEER NETWORKING****Peer Networks in School Reform: Lessons from England and Implications for the United States***Annenberg Institute for School Reform, February 2011*

This report is the first of a series of lessons learned from the Transatlantic School Innovation Alliance. The goal of this partnership is to improve teaching, learning, and educational leadership by creating a peer network of principals and practitioners in urban secondary schools in the United States and the United Kingdom. The report examines how policy shapes practice in these collaborative networks, which benefit educators by allowing them to share knowledge and best practices with their peers in other schools and cities, as well as internationally.

<http://annenberginstitute.org/publication/peer-networks-school-reform-lessons-england-and-implications-united-states>

JSD STAFF

Editor: Tracy Crow

Managing editor: Sue Chevalier

Designer: Kitty Black

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

JSD is published six times a year to promote improvement in the quality of professional learning as a means to improve student learning in K-12 schools. Contributions from members and nonmembers of Learning Forward are welcome.

Manuscripts: Manuscripts and editorial mail should be sent to Christy Colclasure (christy.colclasure@learningforward.org). Learning Forward prefers to receive manuscripts by email. Notes to assist authors in preparing a manuscript are provided at www.learningforward.org/news/jsd/guidelines.cfm. Themes for upcoming issues of *JSD* are available in each issue and also at www.learningforward.org/news/jsd/themes.cfm.

Advertisements: Advertisements are accepted in *JSD*. The *JSD* ad rate card is available at www.learningforward.org/news/jsd/advertising.cfm.

Correspondence: Business correspondence, including orders for back copies, memberships, subscriptions, and remittances for advertisements, should be sent to: Learning Forward, 504 S. Locust St., Oxford, OH 45056.

Telephone: 800-727-7288.

Permissions: Learning Forward's permission policy is available at www.learningforward.org/news/permpolicy.cfm.

JOURNAL OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT
ISSN 0276-928X

JSD is a benefit of membership in Learning Forward. \$89 of annual membership covers a year's subscription to *JSD*. *JSD* is published bimonthly. Periodicals postage paid at Wheelersburg, OH 45694 and additional offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *JSD*, 504 S. Locust St., Oxford, OH 45056.

© Copyright, Learning Forward, 2012. All rights reserved.

The views expressed in *JSD* do not necessarily reflect the official positions of Learning Forward, nor are products and services being advertised endorsed by Learning Forward.

CONNECTING THE STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

As the introduction to the Standards for Professional Learning states, “They are the essential elements of professional learning that function in synergy to enable educators to increase their effectiveness and student learning” (Learning Forward, 2011, p. 14).

STANDARDS →	Learning Communities	Leadership	Resources
<p>QUESTIONS AND LINKS</p> <p>At right are several questions that explore how the Learning Communities standard integrates with the other six standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what degree are learning communities’ professional learning goals aligned with school goals and district priorities? • How cognizant are learning community members of their collective responsibility for the success of all students within the school? • How closely do learning community members follow the cycle of continuous improvement and particularly include learning as a part of their meetings? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What strategies do school leaders use to develop the capacity of teacher leaders to facilitate learning communities? • How do leaders within schools and districts create the necessary conditions that contribute to the success of learning communities? • What strategies are school leaders using to address barriers to the success of learning communities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What resources are available to support the success of learning communities? • How has the school schedule been adjusted to provide time for learning communities to meet within the school day? • What role do teacher leaders and coaches play in supporting learning communities? • How do learning community members work together to conserve resources?

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

If you’re interested in ...	Start with the article on page ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESSENTIAL elements of learning communities 	16, 32, 38, 64
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCHOOL and district examples 	10, 16, 32
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ROLE of tools and protocols 	28, 38
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEADERSHIP development 	16, 28, 48

ASSESS COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY IN YOUR SCHOOL

One of the key concepts in the Learning Communities standard is collective responsibility. As the standard states, “Collective responsibility brings together the entire education community, including members of the education workforce — teachers, support staff, school system staff, and administrators — as well as families, policymakers, and other stakeholders, to increase effective teaching in every classroom,” (Learning Forward, 2011). Researchers have confirmed that collective responsibility contributes to increased student achievement. For example, in a study of more than 800 U.S. high schools, Lee and Smith (1996) found a significant link between collective responsibility and student outcomes. “Considering teachers’ collective responsibility for learning, the findings about its effects on adolescents are unequivocal. In schools with high levels of collective responsibility, where these attitudes are also consistent among the faculty, students learn more in all subjects. Equally important, collective responsibility is associated with less internal stratification in these outcomes by social class.

As *JSD* examines each standard individually, we will also demonstrate the key connections between and among all seven standards.

Data	Learning Designs	Implementation	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do learning communities use student achievement data and educator performance data to set goals and plan their professional learning? • What data do learning community members collect and analyze to measure the effectiveness of learning community processes and results? • How often do learning communities use data to make decisions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which learning designs are learning communities using in their professional learning and collaborative work? • How do learning community members learn about new designs for professional learning? • What factors influence the selection of learning designs for use in the learning community? • What strategies are learning community members using to engage all members? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what degree do members of learning communities share responsibility to support one another in implementing professional learning? • How do members of learning communities support one another to implement new learning within their work settings? • What tools are learning communities using to monitor the frequency and fidelity of implementation of professional learning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do members of learning teams integrate individual members' performance standards goals and student achievement goals into the community's learning goals? • How do learning community members align their professional learning with school and district priorities? • What strategies are learning communities using to address long-term goals and meet interim benchmarks?

Source: Learning Forward. (2011). *Standards for Professional Learning*. Oxford, OH: Author.

TO BEGIN an exploration of the level of collective responsibility in your school, discuss the questions in the table below in learning teams or schoolwide. After each team member answers the questions individually, use responses to build a shared understanding of the current state of the school's commitment to collective responsibility. Then determine your next steps for action for improvement.

	Stongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Stongly disagree
Teachers have opportunities to get to know students outside of their classes.				
Teachers meet regularly in teams for collaborative learning and problem solving.				
Teachers have regular access to information about students in classes beyond their own.				
Teachers have frequent opportunities to support their colleagues one-on-one or in teams.				
Learning teams emphasize sharing best practices and examining individual challenges.				
Teachers make an effort to get to know all students in the building.				
Teachers are eager to share helpful information or strategies.				
Teachers know they can turn to their colleagues anytime for support.				
Teachers celebrate the successes of their colleagues.				
Teachers pool their talents to ensure no student falls behind.				

Sources: Learning Forward. (2011). *Standards for Professional Learning*. Oxford, OH: Author.
 Lee, V.E. & Smith, J.B. (1996, February). Collective responsibility for learning and its effects on gains in achievement for early secondary school students. *American Journal of Education*, 104(2), 103-147.

A TAPE OF INQUIRY AND ACTION

CYCLE OF LEARNING WEAVES ITS WAY THROUGH WASHINGTON DISTRICT

By Harriette Thurber Rasmussen and Kathryn Karschney

As an outsider, you would not guess there was any hierarchy in the room. Glancing down at highlighted and annotated text, the 11 leaders listen, elaborate, advocate, and reflect on the implications of the study they had just read on central office transformation. What do they recognize about themselves in the research? How does this inform their problem of practice? What does this mean for their own practices as leaders? The learning stance at the table belies any suggestion that this is not a level playing field, yet it is, in fact, a multilevel team of building and district leaders, instructional coaches, and the superintendent. The team's coach sits back and watches the exchange with a satisfied smile on her face. She sees what she's been working toward. They own this work; it is theirs.

Imagine a system of learning such as this, where learning for everyone is pervasive, where adults routinely let go of their expertise in ways that enable authentic exploration of new ideas and new practices, and where they expect to take risks. Imagine a system that publicly references their “problems of practice,” transparently communicating that growth for students demands

change and reciprocal accountability throughout the system. And imagine a system so aligned that problems of practice exist at every level, connected in a nested system with visible interdependence.

Welcome to the West Valley School District in eastern Washington. Home to almost 4,000 students, West Valley made a public commitment more than seven years ago that all students would graduate with the option to attend college. This daunting goal — made even more so by the fact that almost half of the district's high school students come from neighboring districts to enroll in West Valley's alternative school system — has required leaders to apply a critical lens to their work and to recognize that the change they want to see begins with the collaborative practice of professional learning.

Superintendent Polly Crowley has carefully put a number of structures and support systems in place to embed the idea that professional learning is routine for all adults. One such support system is West Valley's participation in the Washington State Leadership Academy, a statewide initiative to develop the leadership and organizational capacity for improving coherent systems. Academy participation provides access to a cutting-edge curriculum, cross-district

STRY

cohort support, and a leadership coach to support participants' work. Although West Valley had already established a culture that expected learning and improvement, it was the addition of a tool called the cycle of inquiry (Copland, 2003) that propelled the district's collaborative practice to the next level.

HOW THE CYCLE OF INQUIRY WORKS

Much like a continuous improvement or strategic planning process, the cycle of inquiry incorporates data, action, and evidence of results. Unlike most strategic planning endeavors, the cycle of inquiry incorporates a deliberate strategy and theory of action that explains what is supposed to happen and why. The cycle of inquiry process asks those responsible and accountable to consider first what progress would look like *before* planning action steps, then builds in opportunities to reflect on evidence to make sense of what happened. The cycle of inquiry assumes that learning will occur during the cycle and that this learning will inform a next cycle.

The orienting component of a cycle of inquiry is its problem of practice. The problem, directly related to student learning, drives the cycle and orients the strategy, action, and overall learning. Kathryn Karschney is a coach with Abeo School Change, an external partner specializing in adult learning. Karschney worked with West Valley

WEST VALLEY LEADERSHIP'S PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

How do we cultivate a culture of rigorous and relevant instructional practice, driven by data, to raise achievement for every student?



leaders to develop a districtwide problem of practice and craft a customized cycle of inquiry (see figure above).

West Valley defines its problem of practice as: *How*

do we cultivate a culture of rigorous and relevant instructional practice, driven by data, to raise achievement for every student? The problem of practice ensures that educators' time together as leaders connects instruction to the work of management, organization, and accountability. West Valley takes this one step further, asking educators to examine their own leadership practices in ways that will impact the districtwide problem of practice. Each leader operates from an inquiry question that, as Crowley said, "is the one idea that if you answered this question well (with the help of your colleagues) will result in stronger leadership and better results in meeting your goals."

WHAT THE CYCLE OF INQUIRY LOOKS LIKE

Crowley models this practice by putting her own inquiry question on the table so that her personal learning targets are transparent:

How do we cultivate a culture (principal responsibility) of rigorous and relevant instructional practice (teacher and coach responsibility), driven by data (we have the data and are all responsible to apply it), to raise achievement for every student (ultimate outcome for students)?

Crowley's problem of practice is made concrete by a set of targets she's set for herself:

- That all principal meetings be learning-centered and incorporate new knowledge, research, and relevancy to the district and building leader problems of practice;
- To conduct goal-setting conferences with each district leader twice a year;
- To provide required resources for success (such as data and time for learning); and
- Classroom visitations followed by data conversations with the principal and teacher.

As a result, the district doubled the number of elementary school late starts this year to provide time for learning. Principals created a professional development plan to ensure that late starts are about adult learning — not nuts and bolts, technology updates, or planning. With this in place, Crowley communicates her expectations to teachers along with the resources, such as time, to be successful.

Each month, district leaders meet as a professional learning community, rotating through each other's buildings to learn and provide collegial support. They conduct walk-throughs based on the problem of practice in action. Colleagues are able to help one another make sense of what they're seeing, understand evidence of progress, and consider implications for the host leader and themselves. This data provides a mutual learning experience that benefits individuals and the larger system. According to Karschney, "It also helps develop a culture where every adult is responsible for every student's success. Our colleagues' successes become our own. This has been very important to a culture of mutual learning and the willingness to share failures as well as successes. The learning opportunities are terrific."

THE EFFECT IN THE CLASSROOM

Travis Peterson is principal at Orchard Center Elementary School, where teachers have been working hard on differentiated instruction. Peterson used the concept of differentiation as his leadership question, modeling differentiation for each of his teachers as he tackles his problem of practice: *How can I ensure professional growth for all teachers at Orchard Center by giving them what they need when they need it?*

As Peterson works his way around the cycle of inquiry, he has considered how this might play out and has come up with several possibilities. One is to have grade-level teams use stu-

WHAT DOES A PRINCIPAL'S LEADERSHIP PROBLEM OF PRACTICE LOOK LIKE?

Example 1:

How do I develop and model a building-wide practice where student and staff work is evaluated for learning?

- One guiding principle for me is leading with equity in mind. Do we teach using equitable practices? Do we have an equitable structure and schedule in place?
- I want to use student and teacher work to measure my success.
- I also want to use student focus groups as a measurement.

Example 2:

How do I use data more systematically across grade levels, teams, and staffs across the district while meeting the needs of Title I, Learning Assistance Program, and Response to Intervention?

- I want to help teachers understand that standards need to be posted and public. One of the biggest challenges for struggling learners is knowing what they are supposed to know and be able to do.
- I will measure my success by asking special education students: "What are you doing and why?" If they can explain well, then standards are clearly present and taught.

Example 3:

How can I keep staff focused on instructional strategies?

- I will continue to begin and end every collaborative session with my elevator speech, which allows me to continually send the message what we are doing and why.
- I will bring teams together to share and pull them into a shared conversation.
- I will measure my success with one-on-one interviews about my question above.

dent data to create their own differentiation plans. He and his instructional coach would then provide support and accountability around those plans. Another possibility is to offer professional development that invites teachers to put their work on the table, share ideas, and then develop their own personal action research plans. Peterson thinks this will allow teachers to try new differentiation strategies based on their comfort level, competency, and student needs. He plans to walk through classrooms frequently to talk with teachers about what they are trying and whether the new approach is improving student performance.

As he contemplates the merits of these plans, Peterson also considers how he will measure success (the third stage of the cycle of inquiry) before taking action. “I’d like to talk to the students and ask them if they are being challenged, find out how the differentiation strategies are actually working for them,” Peterson says. “I also want to learn and collect data from teachers around the professional development we provide. Is it helping them to try differentiation strategies? Is what they are trying working — and how do they know? It might be useful to develop a teacher rubric that invites self-reflection. That will give me feedback on my support to them: Am I giving really

them what they need when they need it? I want to figure out how to find a way for my colleagues to observe what teachers are working on so that it can be linked to my problem of practice. What would I want them to see?”

PUTTING STRATEGIES INTO ACTION

To prepare to put strategies into action, Peterson reviews the work West Valley administrators and coaches are doing with the Washington State Leadership Academy on improving leadership practice and quality professional development. He talks to the staff about the district problem of practice, explaining that each leader has developed his or her own problem of practice that aligns with the school’s focus and teacher needs. And, although the staff has heard it before, he shares his own problem of practice again, explaining how he wants to differentiate support for teachers just as they are learning to differentiate support for students. He introduces the district coach, Kathryn Karschney, who begins the session by outlining the principles that guided her decisions on how to support their learning.

“First, I don’t want to waste your time. I want all ideas to be practical,” Karschney says. “Second, I want you to do the heavy lifting and apply these ideas to your own practice. And third,



MASTER OF EDUCATION (online)

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (low residency)

- Focus on social justice & leadership
- National Board Core Propositions embedded in curriculum
- Designed for working adults

APPLY NOW.

www.myunion.edu/edd

www.myunion.edu/med

800.294.8884 | AdmissionsEdD@myunion.edu



Accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. Member: North Central Association (www.ncahlc.org) UI&U does not discriminate in its policies or procedures and conforms with federal non-discriminatory regulations.

<p>WHAT ISN'T COOPERATIVE GROUP WORK</p> <p>In working with differentiation, Karschney suggests that cooperative group work is NOT:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having students sit side by side at the same table doing individual assignments; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigning a report to a group where one student does all the work and the rest put their names on it; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simply discussing ideas, helping each other, or sharing materials — although these are important activities that can be part of cooperative learning.
--	--	---	---



we'll build on the good things you're already doing as a basis for trying new strategies." Then Karschney asks Peterson and another instructional coach to observe her for evidence that she allows the teachers' voices to lead and that teachers' ideas shape the dialogue. Finally, she tells teachers that she will be seeking written feedback on the content and processes, especially on the practicality of the ideas she shared.

Next, Karschney asks teachers to construct their own definition of differentiation using reflecting journaling, partner sharing, and group sharing. Her essential questions: *What makes differentiation so hard? Where are your sticking points?* As they move into new content, Karschney gives a short lecture on cooperative learning as a strategy for differentiation, helping teachers understand the difference between group work and cooperative group work.

Karschney's main point to the teachers — and one she is modeling for Peterson — is that working collaboratively brings with it multiple communication methods. When teachers learn from each other, their thinking becomes visible, which is critical to learning. She ends the short lecture with an assignment to tweak a lesson, adding cooperative learning strategies

and discussing how to integrate critical teacher moves for stronger differentiation.

Throughout the session, teachers participate in cooperative learning strategies. Karschney asks them to reflect on the differentiated learning they've experienced and engages Peterson and the instructional coach in open coaching, asking for feedback on their observations. She knows that the strategies she taught were useful and that certain groupings were more helpful than others. She realizes that some teachers need more practice and that others found the content overwhelming. And she knows which strategies teachers say they will try; so does Peterson, because Karschney has shared the feedback with him.

CLOSING THE LOOP

Peterson's next task is to develop a plan to observe the strat-

egies that teachers said they wanted to try. He'll also use their feedback to consider coaching entry points with individuals — making good on his promise to provide support toward a common goal.

He'll take this experience and the feedback from this session back to the district leadership team on its next visit to Orchard Center. His colleagues can be a second set of eyes for Peterson as they visit classrooms looking for the strategies teachers said they'd like to try. Peterson will then be able to give teachers feedback about what they've seen and provide another set of data for him to interpret with his staff. In this way, the cycle of learning weaves its way through the district as a nested system of inquiry, action, reflection, and renewal.

AN ARTICULATED LENS

The West Valley School District did not reach this level of articulation and systemic connected adult learning in isolation. There are many conditions in place that support the culture the district has achieved that enables the kind of vulnerable, open conversations to push the edges of everyone's practice. A stable, committed district leadership has consistently put students and their well-being at the center of its decisions. External support came through funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and through the district's work with the Washington State Leadership Academy. And an external coach has worked closely with the district at every level — alongside teachers, principals, and district-level leaders. Karschney's long-term relationship and outside eyes have enabled a level of connectedness and articulation that is hard to achieve in isolation.

West Valley's use of the cycle of inquiry as a tool to focus its work, support authentic inquiry, and hold educators accountable to learning, application, and reflection is one that can be replicated in any system, at any level, and within any structure of learning communities in place.

REFERENCE

Copland, M. (2003). Leadership of inquiry: Building and sustaining capacity for school improvement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 25(4), 375-396.

Harriette Thurber Rasmussen (harriette@abeosco.org) and Kathryn Karschney (katy@abeosco.org) are partners and coaches at Abeo School Change in Seattle, Wash., and the Washington State Leadership Academy. ■

West Valley School District
Spokane, Wash.

Number of schools: **14**
Enrollment: **3,803**
Staff: **209 teachers**
Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	79.9%
Black:	2.0%
Hispanic:	8.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander:	2.9%
Native American:	1.1%
Other:	7.6%

Free/reduced lunch: **52.2%**
Special education: **15.8%**
Contact: **Gene Sementi**, assistant superintendent
Email: **gene.sementi@wvsd.org**

When we work together, students succeed

The National Education Association believes every child deserves caring and qualified teachers. Every day in classrooms across America, our 3 million members help their students learn and achieve. When we all work together, the profession grows stronger, teachers are better supported, and our students are prepared to succeed in life and in a worldwide economy.

nea.org

I AM A PROFESSIONAL

LEARNING COMMUNITIES ELEVATE TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND IDENTITY

By Edward F. Tobia and Shirley M. Hord

On a highway that cuts through the downtown of a large urban city was a billboard that read: “Want to teach? When can you start?”

It made us think long and hard about the message society sends to teachers: Anyone can teach. That phrase could come right out of the animated film, *Ratatouille*, in which the phrase “anyone can cook” is a central theme. In one sense, it’s true. Anyone can teach, and everyone does: Parents consciously and unconsciously teach their children, and we all teach others by our examples. We have all been taught to walk, talk in our native tongue, throw a ball, or drive a car. But what separates that form of teaching from those who teach professionally?

There’s one scene in the movie that gets to the point. It’s where chef Gusteau states, “What I say is true — anyone can cook ... but only the fearless can be great.” For a teacher, what does it mean to be fearless? And what does being fearless have to do with being a professional? Let’s start by examining the characteristics of a profession.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A PROFESSION

When we asked a gathering of teachers what it means to be a professional, their initial reaction was to describe how one dresses, interacts with others in a congenial way, and behaves outside of the work setting. It was more about behaving well in the company of others than about the work they do.

As we began our search for literature about teaching as a profession, one of the first articles we came across was one titled, “Is teaching a profession?” (Taylor & Runte, 1995). This didn’t seem promising.

While the concept of professionalism is elusive, we discovered a few sources that attempted to define the characteristics of a profession (Bulger, 1972; Burbules & Densmore, 1991; Larson, 1977):

1. Formal preparation for one’s chosen field, most often through a university;
2. A formal association that holds itself responsible for the quality of services provided by an individual in the profession;
3. A regulated certification process tied to some form of entry examination;
4. A unique set of skills based on a thorough understanding of the knowledge base generated by members of the profession;
5. A service that is both unique and vital to society;
6. A strong sense of service to the clients or recipients of the professional service;
7. A sense of responsibility and service to the profession itself;
8. An ethical code that guides the behavior of individuals;
9. A high degree of respect from the members of society served by the profession.





The occupation of teaching has many of the characteristics of a profession. It was once a calling that had the same degree of respect given to members of the clergy, but somewhere in the evolution of teaching in the United States, that sense of respect has been diminished, especially by policymakers who impose punitive actions when students fail to meet policy mandates.

There are many attempts to improve teaching emanating from the U.S. Department of Education, state departments of education, and organizations such as the National Center for Teacher Effectiveness, ASCD, National Council of Teachers of English, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and Learning Forward, as well as national, regional, and local teacher unions. There are many strategies on how to improve teaching, but very few coming from teachers. How can teachers claim to be professionals if all of their actions are mandated and regulated from outside of the schoolhouse? What keeps them from demonstrating to policymakers that they can fearlessly address all of the learning challenges they face in classrooms every day? We will address those questions by exploring the emergence of the teaching profession, why it has met challenges getting there, and how teachers can fearlessly show that they are true professionals.

6 characteristics of an effective professional learning community

- Structural conditions.
- Intentional collective learning.
- Supportive relational conditions.
- Peers supporting peers.
- Shared values and vision.
- Shared and supportive leadership.

THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF TEACHING

Teaching in the United States was initially a cottage industry. Mothers, committed to strong religious beliefs, worked with their children in the evenings. The Bible served as the single source of reading material, and a piece of charcoal rescued from the fireplace was used to teach basic mathematics. These isolated entrepreneurs worked as the sole proprietor of formal learning as “dame schools” (Monaghan, 1988; Sugg, 1978) developed to serve children who lived in close proximity to the sole educator, a mother.

As settlements developed, churches and one-room schoolhouses served a sparse population. A teacher with little preparation (graduation from primary school) worked in isolation. Because few others in the communities possessed reading or writing skills, the teacher enjoyed high regard and esteem for his or her skills and assumed wisdom. Teaching became a status symbol in the community. Teacher training was slow to develop. From 1850 to 1920, normal schools began to provide this service (Neil, 1986). Teachers were seen as being “educated,” adding to their stature. At the turn of the 20th century, teaching met many of the characteristics of a profession.

However, business trends began to influence the emerging profession:

“In the 20th century, as schools grew larger, school principals and district superintendents became important for the role they could play in managing the school campuses and the district to which they were assigned. These players on the educational stage enacted their roles in the interest of efficiency, adopted from the business models of the time ... (and) classrooms and cultures promoted insulation from any new ideas, leaving principals and classroom teachers generally as self-employed individuals. Here, individual teachers in their isolated classrooms (even if they shared a classroom wall) conducted their work as best they could, dependent on their personal knowledge of curriculum and instruction, and theory of student learning” (Hord & Tobia, 2012, p. 19).

Efficiency took over, and an entire industry of teacher in-service training took the developing knowledge base and put it into the hands of people outside the schoolhouse. Teachers began to be treated as less than professional.

THE DE-PROFESSIONALIZATION OF TEACHING

After the publication of “A Nation at Risk,” the landmark 1983 report on American education (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), the public began to demand greater quality in all schools, and that quality was defined by results on achievement tests. Teacher evaluation systems developed, tied to high-stakes testing programs, tied to well-meaning but harsh accountability systems based on rewards and punishment. The result was mistrust among peers, and teachers and administrators playing the system or even cheating.

Teachers, lacking a voice in legislatures passing strict ac-

countability systems, turned to unions. Many of these unions used tactics such as strikes and walkouts, which are not characteristics associated with a profession. Legislatures began to look outside the traditional teacher preparation programs at universities to fill vacancies with teachers who complete alternative certification. Many of these alternative programs are excellent, but some are less than satisfactory. While the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has made progress toward defining what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do, the board is designed for practicing teachers rather than the kind of national board suggested in 1985 by Albert Shanker, then president of the American Federation of Teachers: “It would be a group which would spend a period of time studying what is it that a teacher should know before becoming certified, and how do you measure it? ... Over a period of time, I would hope that the board eventually would be controlled by the profession itself, even if it didn’t start completely that way” (Shanker, 1985).

The concept of professional teachers controlling entry into the profession is a long way from our current system, which treats teachers as less than professional. The transition back to professional status starts with teachers who have become “fearless” enough to gather in small communities as learners to constantly support one another’s professional growth. These small teams of teachers are coming together in schools across the country to learn how to solve the challenges of teaching and learning. These islands of excellence consist of teachers who behave as professionals. The movement called professional learning communities must become the norm in every school for teachers to claim their place as respected professionals.

THE RE-PROFESSIONALIZATION OF TEACHING

Teachers work with students every day, and many work in challenging conditions. In a small U.S. town on the Mexico border, teachers at San Jose Middle School (the school name is a pseudonym) convene in data teams and meet in professional learning communities to examine the impact of their teaching on student learning. They have matured from teams coming together to do common planning to teams that learn the most effective ways of addressing the learning needs of all students. The school now exemplifies six characteristics of an effective professional learning community: structural conditions, intentional collective learning, supportive relational conditions, peers supporting peers, shared values and vision, and shared and supportive leadership. Here is how those characteristics look at San Jose Middle School.

Structural conditions

The district provides an identified time for the communities to meet daily for one hour before the instructional day begins. At San Jose, several communities meet simultaneously in the library or occasionally in a teacher’s classroom. The district

The American Federation of Teachers proudly supports

LEARNING FORWARD

for providing our members with learning opportunities
through high-quality professional development.

You help us make a difference every day.



A Union of Professionals

Randi Weingarten
PRESIDENT

Lorretta Johnson
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Francine Lawrence
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

The AFT represents 1.5 million pre-K through 12th-grade teachers; paraprofessionals and other school-related personnel; higher education faculty and professional staff; federal, state and local government employees; nurses and healthcare workers; and early childhood educators.

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO • 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W. • Washington, DC 20001 • 202-879-4400 • www.aft.org

 www.aft.org

 AFTunion

 @AFTunion

expects groups to use student data from multiple sources to identify students in need of improved performance.

Intentional collective learning

Once student needs are identified, communities discuss ways to address those needs. Teachers share repertoire, experiences, or solutions to these challenges. If no teacher in the community offers an instructional suggestion, the group may seek help from another team or from the master teacher, a supporter of their learning and work supplied by the district. When the community determines a new practice to employ in the classroom, members engage in learning what the new practice is and how to use it.

Supportive relational conditions

How community members relate to each other is highly important to ensure that data study, suggestion giving, discussions about the advantages and disadvantages of interventions for students, and how to learn how to deliver the interventions proceed productively. Teachers' respect and regard for each other, their use of conversation styles, their interactions, and how they confront conflict all contribute to strong trust in each other and to a smoothly functioning community.

The principal at San Jose encourages relational conditions by providing time for members to interact in a nonthreatening environment as well as supporting their efforts to collaborate.

Peers supporting peers

Teachers visit each other on invitation to observe the host teacher's identified classroom practices, take notes about the observations of the host teacher's requested behaviors, and share feedback later. Or, a colleague might visit another classroom to observe quality teaching in order to learn a new instructional strategy. Peer visitations provide support as well as a way for teachers to hold one another accountable for operating at their professional peak in service to students. San Jose's teachers are proud to share their skills and are open to learn from one another.

Shared values and vision

All of the actions described above are done within the parameters of a shared vision of what the school and classrooms should be about, and in alignment with a mental image of what new strategies and processes would look like when implemented in a high-quality way.

Teachers are developing the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind that promote their feeling of efficacy and the power to influence others — colleagues and students. Community members have grown in competence and confidence, and with trust in each other, so that they hold each other accountable.

Shared and supportive leadership

The principal creates opportunities for teachers to take on

leadership roles and supports them in developing the skills to do so. Importantly, within state and district rules and regulations, policies and practices, learning community members have begun to make suggestions for what they will learn and what they will do in support of students' increased learning success. These suggestions and decisions come from their own experiences, reading and study, and interactions with colleagues in large group learning sessions, at conferences, and in school-based professional learning. They are developing the confidence to offer ideas, to discuss and support them, to listen to others, and to compromise in the best interests of students.

BRIDGING TO PROFESSIONALISM

Returning to the characteristics of persons who represent a profession in a high-quality way, two characteristics stand out:

- A strong sense of service to the clients or recipients of the professional service; and
- A unique set of skills based on a thorough understanding of the knowledge base generated by members of the profession.

It has become increasingly clear that fearless teachers engage in continuous learning, maintain a current knowledge and skills base, and participate in making decisions about where, how, and when to employ the skills and knowledge they have shared.

At San Jose Middle School, teachers' strong sense of service to students, who are the recipients of their concerned efforts, is a strong factor permeating the fabric of teachers' work. While teachers have not always immediately embraced change, they have reached consensus to improve their practices and, subsequently, student outcomes.

In community, participants have acquired new knowledge and skills and gained competence and confidence in their role as educators (relational conditions). They self-organize their teams, share ideas, discuss issues, make decisions, and act upon them (shared and supportive leadership). All of this is based on a shared vision of their school and its work. Teachers visiting each other's classrooms to observe their practice (peers supporting peers) is the hallmark of a mature group of professionals, seeking colleagues' feedback in order to improve their classroom and school practice.

These characteristics have developed through the structures and schedules of the school's learning teams or communities (structural conditions). In the community, the team studies data, identifies problems, determines solutions, and learns how to use the solutions for improvement (intentional collegial learning) based on student data.

San Jose educators have steadily grown in their instructional practice so that each student reaches successful learning. The school's state achievement ratings have steadily risen, to everyone's satisfaction — students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Students benefit from the long-term vision of the district

Continued on p. 26

Building the profession...
to grow great schools.



NBPTS is the recognized source of the
highest standards and practices that lead
to improved teaching, leading and learning.

www.nbpts.org
1-888-780-7805



MIDWESTERN MAGIC

IOWA'S STATEWIDE INITIATIVE ENGAGES
TEACHERS, ENCOURAGES LEADERSHIP,
AND ENERGIZES STUDENT LEARNING

By Dana L. Carmichael and Rita Penney Martens

"I've been through five years of 17 different initiatives, and nothing seemed to fit together. Halfway through my first day of authentic intellectual work training, the light bulb came on, and I thought: This is the piece that's been missing."

— Spencer (Iowa) High School teacher leader, 2011

This reaction is common among educators engaged in AIW Iowa, an initiative that engages teachers and administrators in professional learning communities that are improving student achievement, increasing student engagement, and building a schoolwide professional culture focused on improving instruction. This initiative, now in its fifth year, is sponsored

by the Iowa Department of Education and is built on the framework of authentic intellectual work (Newmann & Associates, 1996; Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001; Newmann, King, & Carmichael, 2007; King, Schroeder, & Chawszczweski, 2001).

The framework for authentic intellectual work is shorthand for distinguishing between the more complex accomplishments of skilled adults and the usual work students do in school. Authentic intellectual work involves original application of knowledge and skills, rather than just routine application of facts and procedures. It also entails careful study of a particular topic or problem and results in a product or presentation that has meaning beyond success in school.

Using data gathered from its statewide assessment, Iowa's Department of Education examined the performance

of students in grades 3 through 11 in schools in which all teachers engaged in authentic intellectual work as their primary professional development for at least one year before administering the test. Those data were compared to data from an equal number of schools that were as closely matched as possible on enrollment, race, socioeconomic status, English language learners, and disability. In comparisons in nine grades and four subjects for each — 36 comparisons — students in schools implementing authentic intellectual work scored significantly higher in 26 comparisons, with higher percentages of students proficient in 32 comparisons.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

The framework was developed at the Center for Organization and Restructuring Schools at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Researchers set out to determine whether students who experienced higher levels of instruction and assessment that promoted authentic intellectual work would show higher intellectual performance and achievement on standardized tests of basic skills and curriculum content. Results were conclusive: The quality of teaching and assessment impacts student achievement (Avery, Freeman, & Carmichael-Tanaka, 2002; King, Schroeder, & Chawaszczewski, 2001; Ladwig, Smith, Gore, Amosa, & Griffiths, 2007; Newmann & Associates, 1996; Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001; Newmann, King, & Carmichael, 2007).

The distinctive characteristics of authentic intellectual

CRITERIA AND STANDARDS FOR AUTHENTIC INTELLECTUAL WORK

Criteria for authentic intellectual work	Instruction	Tasks (assessments)	Student performance (student work)
Construction of knowledge	Higher-order thinking	Construction of knowledge	Construction of knowledge
Disciplined inquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep knowledge and student understanding • Substantive conversation 	Elaborated communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptual understanding • Elaborated communication
Value beyond school	Value beyond school	Value beyond school	

Source: Newmann, King, & Carmichael, 2007.

work are summarized as *construction of knowledge* through the use of *disciplined inquiry* to produce discourse, products, or performances that have value beyond school (King, Newmann, & Carmichael, 2009). The box above presents these criteria and the different standards for authentic instruction, assignments, and student work.

Iowa's Department of Education, with Carmichael, King, and Newmann, designed the authentic intellectual work initiative to improve teachers' ability to design instruction and assessments that deliver authentic intellectual work. The specifics were infused into the context of the research-based Iowa Professional Development

COMPONENTS FOR AUTHENTIC INTELLECTUAL WORK TEAMS

Components	Results in...
1. Learning teams include four to six people (seven maximum).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common language. • Renewed energy. • Authentic intellectual work fluency. • Trust. • Increased student engagement. • Increased test scores. • Systemwide change.
2. Learning teams meet four to six hours per month .	
3. Learning team members bring artifacts that need improvement (tasks, student work, or instruction clips).	
4. Every team meeting includes scoring artifacts , ideally from the team.	
5. Learning teams use authentic intellectual work tools , including scoring criteria booklet and protocols, as a springboard for generating ideas for consideration.	
6. Authentic intellectual work is job-embedded , not as an add-on, but as an essential part of professional learning.	

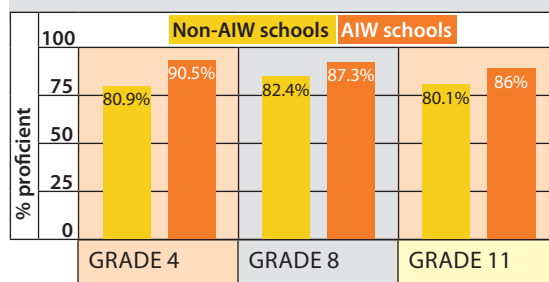
Learning team members immerse themselves in their own professional learning for one year and agree to serve as anchors on future learning teams after that.

Source: Center for Authentic Intellectual Work, 2010.

IOWA TESTING RESULTS

Chart shows the percentage of 4th-, 8th-, and 11th-grade students who rated proficient in mathematics on the 2010-11 Iowa Tests. The scores of 16 schools participating in AIW Iowa are compared with the scores of 17 nonparticipating schools of equivalent size and demographics.

Student achievement in AIW and non-AIW schools in mathematics



Source: Iowa Department of Education.

AIW IOWA EVALUATION

The Iowa Department of Education evaluated the initiative in 2010-11, analyzing four sets of data:

- Focus group interviews of 27 administrators in AIW Iowa schools;
- Case studies of four AIW Iowa high schools in their fourth year of implementation;
- A review of original and revised tasks from high school AIW Iowa teachers in the four core content areas; and
- A comparison of achievement results on state tests for students in AIW Iowa schools and students in similar non-AIW Iowa schools.

Student achievement

The evaluation reviewed Iowa testing data from 16 schools engaged in authentic intellectual work as their primary professional development for one year before the date of testing and compared those data to a set of schools matched on the following characteristics: enrollment, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, percentage of English language learners, and students with individualized education programs. Data were compared for grades 3-8 and grade 11.

Schools that implemented authentic intellectual work have significantly higher scores in mathematics on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and Iowa Test

of Educational Development. The mean difference in average mathematics scores between participating and nonparticipating schools varies from 5.27 for grade 3 to 18.33 for grade 9. In reading, schools that implemented authentic intellectual work have significantly higher scores for grades 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10 on the state assessments. The mean difference in average reading scores between participating and nonparticipating schools varies from 2.40 for grade 7 to 11.64 for grade 10.

Impact on instruction

Focus groups and the case studies both described the change from teacher as deliverer

of facts to teacher as facilitator of student knowledge and skill development that is meaningful and valuable. Teachers examine their practice, asking questions such as, "Will this lesson provoke students' higher-order thinking and substantive conversation?" or "Does this unit lead students to apply and understand knowledge in contexts beyond school?" or "Will this assessment task require students to show an in-depth understanding of an important concept?"

Impact on assessment

High school teachers participating in authentic intellectual work developed assessment tasks that scored significantly higher in the

Model, which included theory, demonstration, practice, and embedded coaching. Based on research by Joyce, Showers, and others (Joyce & Showers, 2002), the Iowa Professional Development Model aims to increase student achievement by improving teacher knowledge and skills through job-embedded professional learning. Team meetings use ongoing reflection that engages teachers in using the *Standards and Scoring Criteria for Teachers' Tasks, Student Performance, and Instruction* (Newmann, King, & Carmichael, 2009) to examine the quality of their tasks, student work, and instruction. Instead of focusing on what has been successful, teachers are expected to bring artifacts that are not getting the results they hoped for with students.

Iowa's authentic intellectual work initiative is built on six components that allow every school to adopt variations to suit its own climate and context. For example, a school is not told when to expand or which staff to select for initial participation. One school might start with math and science teachers, while another might start with a group of fine arts, English, and special education teachers. Teachers and administrators directing their own learning is a critical component of the initiative.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

These key factors contributed to the initiative's coherence and fidelity.

AIW Iowa started small. The first year, nine schools participated, and these schools were limited to pilot teams of eight

to 10 teachers and administrators meeting four to six hours a month for job-embedded professional development in teams of four to six people. This structure ensures a greater likelihood of trust and allows those involved to focus on changing their practice in a safe environment.

The learning comes from the conversation, not from being right. Team meetings foster dissonance as team members, after individually rating the authenticity of the artifact brought using the authentic intellectual work rubric, discuss their scores, collectively striving for consensus. The process supports a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006) by giving all teachers the opportunity to improve their practice at their own pace.

Capacity is built at the local and regional level. In the beginning, Iowa had no authentic intellectual work coaches, but began to develop its internal capacity immediately by partnering with Iowa area educational agencies to identify coaches. Because this approach proved successful, it has become an established practice. Prospective coaches engage in a two-year process that includes developing authentic intellectual work mastery, coaching skills, and the capacity to be self-reflective.

The focus is on the school as the unit of change. From the outset, local leadership and coaches are partners in building mastery in staff, expanding the program, and allocating resources at leadership team meetings. These sessions deepen local leadership's understanding of the authentic intellectual work framework and provide a safe environment for leaders to practice scoring.

standards for authenticity in mathematics, science, and social studies. One teacher said, "I enjoy collaborating and gaining feedback from other teachers to build better tasks. I like collaborating with other people in my department, but have also gained insights from other teachers who see my same students but ask them to use different skills. I think with a 'science mind,' as do some of my students. It helps me to see how a student with an 'English language mind' thinks by hearing an English teacher share her viewpoint."

Change in professional culture

Administrators referred to

the level of collaboration among teachers as "unprecedented." Using common protocols and criteria, teachers of different disciplines examine their practice. All teachers, even those who are reluctant or resistant to change, find value in making their instruction better. One administrator said that nonparticipating teachers "are banging on the door, ready to get going." Another principal described the pressure he gets from teachers whenever he schedules a different focus for professional development. "Teachers are frustrated because they feel like they're cheating on AIW when we do something else. I've been talking to them for three years now about what

professional development is and isn't, and they've been listening. So now they say, 'C'mon, why are we doing something else? You keep talking about a sustained focus.' They turn it back on me because this benefits their kids, and that's what teachers truly care about."

Leadership

AIW Iowa has improved collaboration between administrators and teachers, according to those interviewed in focus groups and case studies. Because administrators are part of the learning team, they find themselves giving teachers more relevant feedback. As one principal said, "We're all professional educators

working toward the same goal." AIW Iowa provides teachers with more leadership opportunities.

Student benefits

According to the report, "The quality of classroom discussions has been at a much deeper and more thoughtful level. Expectations for students have been increased and curriculum is now more closely connected to students' lives, making lessons more challenging and, simultaneously, more meaningful." Because students are more engaged, they are more persistent in problem solving.

Authentic intellectual work is used to course-correct and provide critical feedback. These visits foster reflective practices by pushing the level of high-risk conversation that moves the group toward a deeper understanding of how to improve its practice. "AIW has become an irreplaceable source of collegial dialogue that incites ongoing, meaningful growth for me as a teacher," said Sarah Brown Wessling, 2010 National Teacher of the Year award recipient. "Each AIW experience has left me with thought-provoking questions, a clearer sense of my instruction, and the motivation to become a more deliberate teacher."

The informal networks drive the reform's pace. When teachers on AIW Iowa teams began engaging in examining their practice, their energy and enthusiasm attracted others. When one school district becomes involved and starts to see results, other districts want to get involved.

AIW Iowa professional learning transforms student learning. Not only are teachers constructing their knowledge around their own tasks and instruction, but students are experiencing a difference in teaching and learning as well. This transforms the learner's experience. Students begin to make meaning by constructing their own knowledge around an idea or question, then explore solutions in the same way that professionals and experts in the field do.

The excitement for learning is contagious, but extends beyond high levels of engagement to better achievement. A principal who participated in the focus groups offered an illustration.

"Students in a physics class were trying to figure out a new way to have something work. They would come in before school, stay after school, and bring their friends in before school and after school to see if this experiment would work. That persistence to solving a complex task is what emerges through authentic intellectual work."

REFERENCES

- Avery, P.G., Freeman, C., & Carmichael-Tanaka, D.L. (2002). Developing authentic instruction in the social studies. *Journal of Research in Education*, 12(1), 50-56.
- Center for Authentic Intellectual Work. (2010). *Learning log*. St. Paul, MN: Author.
- Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York: Random House.
- Iowa Department of Education. (2011). *An initial evaluation of the Iowa DE project to enhance students' authentic intellectual work: Fall 2007 to fall 2011*. Des Moines, IA: Author. Available online at http://educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1767&catid=449&Itemid=2544#evaluation.
- Joyce, B. & Showers, B. (2002). *Student achievement through staff development*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- King, M.B., Newmann, F.M., & Carmichael, D. (2009). Authentic intellectual work: Common standards for teaching social studies. *Social Education*, 73(1), 43-49.
- King, M.B., Schroeder, J., & Chawaszczewski, C. (2001,

September). *Authentic assessment and student performance in inclusive schools* (Brief No. 5). Madison, WI: Research Institute on Secondary Education Reform for Youth with Disabilities.

Ladwig, J., Smith, M., Gore, J., Amosa, W., & Griffiths, T. (2007, November). *Quality of pedagogy and student achievement: Multi-level replication of authentic pedagogy*. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education conference, Fremantle, Western Australia.

Newmann, F.M. & Associates. (1996). *Authentic achievement: Restructuring schools for intellectual quality*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Newmann, F.M., Bryk, A.S., & Nagaoka, J. (2001). *Authentic intellectual work and standardized tests: Conflict or coexistence*. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Newmann, F.M., King, M.B., & Carmichael, D.L. (2007). *Authentic instruction and assessment: Common standards for rigor and relevance in teaching academic subjects*. Des Moines, IA: Iowa Department of Education.

Newmann, F.M., King, M.B., & Carmichael, D.L.

CRITERIA FOR EFFECTIVE AUTHENTIC INTELLECTUAL WORK PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

- Student-centered focus through quality teacher reflection.
- Collective accountability within learning teams.
- Flexible and focused coherence.
- Long-term, job-embedded professional learning.
- Inclusive of all staff and students.

(2009). *Standards and scoring criteria for teachers' tasks: Student performance and instruction*. St. Paul, MN: Itasca Press.

Dana L. Carmichael (dana@centerforaiw.com) is executive director of the Center for Authentic Intellectual Work in St. Paul, Minn. Rita Penney Martens (rita.martens@iowa.gov) is lead consultant for Iowa Core in the Iowa Department of Education. ■

I am a professional

Continued from p. 20

and from teachers' work in learning communities.

Educators in effective learning communities also gain a professional perspective and demeanor. Not all teachers involved in professional learning communities are engaging in the research-based factors described here. Nor are all teachers given the latitude to study instructional problems, explore solutions, and make decisions about what to do. This can happen only if the leadership of the school supports it and creates working conditions in which professional learning communities flourish.

But these educators, who have sharpened their practice and keep focused on student success, can be described as authentic professional educators, continuously improving their knowledge and skills; committing their energy, resources, and wisdom to students; and, at the end of the day, representing all that is best in the profession of education.

REFERENCES

Bulger, P. (1972). *Education as a profession*. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education.

Burbules, N. & Densmore, K. (1991, March). The limits of making teaching a profession. *Educational Policy*, 5(1), 44-63.

Hord, S.M. & Tobia, E.F. (2012). *Reclaiming our teaching profession: The power of educators learning in community*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Larson, M.S. (1977). *The rise of professionalism: A sociological analysis*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Monaghan, E.J. (1988, March). Literacy instruction and gender in colonial New England. *American Quarterly*, 40(1), 18-41.

National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983, April). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform*. Washington, DC: Author.

Neil, R. (1986). *Eleven traditional methods of inservice teacher education* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 299 244).

Shanker, A. (1985, January 29). Speech presented at the National Press Club, Washington, DC. Available at www.reuther.wayne.edu/files/63.93.pdf.

Sugg, R.S. (1978). *Motherteacher: The feminization of American education*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia.

Taylor, G. & Runte, R. (Eds.). (1995). *Thinking about teaching: An introduction*. Toronto: Harcourt Brace.

Edward F. Tobia (ed.tobia@sedl.org) works at SEDL in the Improving School Performance Unit in Austin, Texas. Shirley M. Hord (shirley.hord@learningforward.org) is scholar laureate for Learning Forward and scholar emerita at SEDL. ■

Lead. Inspire. Empower to new heights.

July 22-25, 2012 • Sheraton Denver Downtown

Learning Forward 2012 Summer Conference



Don't miss out on this summer's premier learning opportunity!

Summer Conference attendees experience learning and networking that transform teaching and leadership practices and impact student success. Hear keynote addresses by **Tom Boasberg**, **Carol Dweck**, **Avis Glaze**, **Lily Eskelsen**, and **Chris Lehmann**. Experience more than 150 conference sessions led by practitioners demonstrating the impact quality professional learning has on teacher practice and student success.

Earn CEUs for your attendance

We are excited to offer the opportunity for conference attendees to earn Continuing Education Units through St. Mary's College of California. To learn more, please visit www.learningforward.org/opportunities/ceu2012.pdf.

Bring a team and save!

Groups of 10 or more can get additional savings. Call 800-727-7288 for more details.

Learn more at
www.learningforward.org/summer12.



Focus on today's essential topics

- Implementing Common Core State Standards
- Using formative assessment to make instructional decisions
- Technology resources that improve teaching and learning
- Effective facilitation
- Evaluating professional learning
- Much, much more.



WHERE PRINCIPALS DARE *to* DREAM

CRITICAL FRIENDS GROUP NARROWS THE GAP BETWEEN VISION AND REALITY

By Kevin Fahey

Being a principal was the most demanding job I ever had. I worked hard, mostly in isolation. Like most principals, I struggled to manage the position's political and bureaucratic necessities in order to concentrate on what I thought was the fundamental work of schools: teaching and learning. I struggled to continue to learn and grow as a leader to keep alive a dream of schools as collabora-

tive, reflective places that persistently focused on teacher practice and student learning. It was a hard job, and I am proud of the work I did. I lasted three years.

It was only after I left the principalship that I learned that a large body of research confirms that principals work in isolated, often competitive, bureaucratic cultures and that one key to their success is the ability to continue to learn and grow as leaders (Mitgang & Maeroff, 2008). Successful principals continue to learn about leading. The dilemma is, given the complexity and pressures of school leadership, what could that continued leadership learning look like?

CRITICAL FRIENDS GROUP MODEL

In fall 2004, a group of recent graduates of a district-college educational leadership partnership program built on the concept of learning community to craft one answer to the question of continued leadership learning. The Tri District Initiative in Leadership Education, a partnership between Salem State University in Salem, Mass., and neighboring school districts, was designed as a school leadership degree and licensure program with a clear focus. The program recognized that effective school leadership involves carrying out the technical aspects of a principal's work and that successful leaders create school communities that are reflective, collaborative and, most of all, persistently focused on student, adult, and organizational learning (Fahey, 2011).

Program graduates formed a professional learning community based on a Critical Friends Group model, which they had used as part of their leadership practicum. This model is characterized by two essential elements: regular, intentional use of structured conversations — or protocols — to guide the group's learning and skilled facilitation (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 1997; School Reform Initiative, 2010). The Critical Friends Group model recognizes that because schools are not always reflective, collaborative places, educators need to be very intentional about creating, managing, and sustaining their own learning. Members of Critical Friends Groups understand that the use of protocols combined with thoughtful facilitation is a powerful support for ongoing, useful professional learning (McDonald, Mohr, Dichter, & McDonald, 2007).

Initially, the group used the model as short-term support for program graduates transitioning to formal leadership positions. At the beginning, I facilitated this initial Critical Friends Group as part of the district-university partnership. However, the work has since grown into something more enduring and powerful in which group members take responsibility for facilitation and I, like everyone else in the group, am a learner (Fahey, 2011).

Following the Critical Friends Group model, the group used a defined structure for its 2½-hour monthly meetings. Every meeting began with a check-in, when members of the group set aside time to reflect "... upon a thought, a story, an insight, a question, or a feeling that they are carrying with them into the session, and then connect it to the work they are about to do" (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 1997).

Next, the group typically used a protocol to discuss and receive feedback on a specific dilemma of leadership practice. The group also used protocols to examine data, read professional texts, and look collaboratively at student work. The Critical Friends Group often scheduled enough time to complete two protocols in a meeting. In addition, at

the end of the meeting, the group reflected on the session.

From fall 2004 to spring 2009, the group's 13 members met 44 times and used eight protocols to unpack dilemmas of leadership practice, look at relevant texts, examine student and leadership work, and continue to learn about leading. The structure that the group used most frequently (21 times) was the Consultancy Protocol (School Reform Initiative, 2010).

The Consultancy Protocol is a structured conversation that is divided into six discrete steps:

1. The presenter describes a dilemma and the context in which it is situated. Typically, the presenter ends the presentation with a question for the group to consider.
2. The facilitator guides the group through a series of questions, starting with very specific, clarifying questions. Clarifying questions have very brief, factual answers and are designed to help the group understand the context of the dilemma.
3. The facilitator asks the group for probing questions — questions that ask the presenter to do more analysis or expand his or her thinking about the dilemma. The group does not discuss the presenter's answers.
4. The presenter remains silent while the group discusses the dilemma and the presenter's question. The group might, for example, reflect on what they heard, what they thought the real dilemma might be, or what assumptions might influence the dilemma. Sometimes, a group offers concrete suggestions; other times, the discussion centers more on understanding the true nature of the dilemma.
5. The presenter reflects on what he or she heard and what resonated during the discussion.
6. The facilitator asks the group to reflect on the process (School Reform Initiative, 2010).

I struggled to manage the position's political and bureaucratic necessities in order to concentrate on what I thought was the fundamental work of schools: teaching and learning.

WHAT WE LEARNED

At the April 2009 meeting, group members, reflecting on their five years of work together, suggested that their learning together had taken place at two levels. The first level was around content-specific aspects of their leadership practice. In the five years that they met, the group considered topics such as supervision and evaluation, negotiating boundaries with other administrators, parent surveys, budget crises, literacy in schools, helping struggling teachers, and many others. During the 44 sessions, the principals considered 34 issues of principal practice. Some, such as

the work of building professional community in schools (eight sessions) or having difficult conversations (six sessions), were the focus of multiple meetings.

In considering these issues, group members acknowledged that their Critical Friends Group learning led them to a place, as one participant said, “where you are learning with other principals and don’t have to fake it.” After a session around a challenging personnel issue, one principal summed up his learning by saying, “Whom do you test your ideas on? I often have no place in my school or district to learn.” The Critical Friends Group encouraged members to continue to learn about specific aspects of their practice in a way that was not regularly available to them. Moreover, this learning was directly connected to real-time issues that the school leaders were facing.

The second level of learning connected to more emotional and personal elements of principal practice. One principal described how “wiping bottoms and loading buses could easily become my daily work. There is a gap between my dreams and vision as a principal and the reality of my work.” Another admitted, “I am being robbed of my time to spend with kids and focus on learning.” Over time, principals spent less time considering the technical issues of their work and more time on concerns such as maintaining balance and “not being off-kilter.” One typical comment was, “It is hard to spill it out. But I know all you guys, I know you are here to help me, and so it’s easier to do.” Over the years that the group met, members more easily articulated and

reflected on the affective and personal learning that the principalship requires.

In the April 2009 meeting, one principal summed up the emotional and personal nature of her learning in the Critical Friends Group by admitting, “This is where I come to check in with my dreams.” Others added how the group’s work was “a critical reminder about what our real work is,” “a way that dreams of good schools are made and sustained,” and “a conversation that fuels me, feeds me, that helps me sustain my personal vision and goals.” For these school leaders, the Critical Friends Group is a place where principals can look beyond their hectic, fragmented daily practice and continue to learn about and sustain the personal vision of schools that brought them into leadership in the first place.

HOW WE LEARNED

Not only were group members able to reflect on what they were learning, they could also describe how the group supported that learning. For example, many members highlighted how reflective, collaborative conversations were difficult to find. Comments included, “In this job, you can go weeks without

this type of conversation,” “Now I have a place to come and hash things out,” and “The Critical Friends Group almost has a spiritual quality.”

Another principal described her experience this way: “The group is honest, truthful. You have to trust in the group. I knew that when I missed Critical Friends Group meetings, I was really missing something. I think it was the honest, truthful conversations, and knowing that you had a voice. I don’t always feel I always have these.”

Another said, “In our regular administrative meetings, I often say we have to slow it down. That is what we do in the Critical Friends Group. It is slower-paced, it is focused, it is thoughtful, and it is purposeful.” Members considered the Critical Friends Group a thoughtful, safe, reflective, and honest place that could create and sustain learning.

Every group member noted that a commitment to intellectual rigor and the use of protocols were essential in creating this reflective, collaborative learning environment. For example, one principal said, “I look at our Critical Friends Group as having rigor. There is always a focus. People bring a problem. We use a protocol. There is a lot of opening up in those sessions. It is more than a support group. We had a support group in a system I used to work in, but I would feel funny about bringing a text to look at or presenting a problem or using a protocol. I could not even suggest it.”

Another member said, “I never in my wildest imagination would have ever dreamed that I would have valued protocols in a conversation. But I need that. I need to have a structure if I am going to get value out of something. If I don’t, I will just go on and on, and regress into some anecdotal conversation.” Another said: “The great thing was that all of our Critical Friends Group sessions had a protocol to guide the conversation. It was great to be able share yourself.” The protocols focused the learning and created a sense of rigor.

The members also noted that the use of protocols supported their individual learning. Members’ comments included: “This is where you really get it. It seems like we are all invested in this format, in this way of having conversations.” “It makes a difference going through the process. It made me see things that I would not have seen in another way. It was helpful to hear.” “The Critical Friends Group reminds you that there is more than one way to look at a problem. You really need to stay open and respect other people’s perspectives.” The protocols opened up everyone in the group to a variety of perspectives on leadership practice.

Perhaps the most compelling piece of data about the effectiveness of this leadership Critical Friends Group is this: Without district support, stipends, professional development points, or graduate credits, these school leaders continue to meet and learn together about leadership. The engine that continues to drive the group is a desire not only to continue to learn — for

Continued on p. 42

Without district support, stipends, professional development points, or graduate credits, these school leaders continue to meet and learn together about leadership.

Learning Forward Membership Referral Program



As a Learning Forward member, you understand the impact professional learning has on educator effectiveness and student achievement. Now you have a chance to share the valuable tools and resources you receive as a member of the Learning Forward community by referring a friend or colleague to join our organization.

As part of our membership referral program, each new member you refer enters your name into a drawing for a free five-day registration to Learning Forward's 2012 Annual Conference, Dec. 1-5 in Boston. You will also receive \$10 off your next membership renewal for every new member you recruit.

How it works:

- The new member simply fills in your name, city, and state on the membership application form or mentions your name when joining by phone at 800-727-7288.
- For each new member who adds your information to his or her application, you may receive a \$10 off coupon toward your next membership renewal. There is no limit to the membership discounts you may receive for referring new members, and no limit to the number of times your name may be entered into the drawing for the free conference registration.
- The winner of the free conference registration will be selected Sept. 14. The winner may use the conference registration for herself/himself or may register a colleague.

Apply online: www.learningforward.org/commerce/join.cfm.



BOSTON | *learningforward*
**2012 ANNUAL
CONFERENCE**
DEC. 1-5, 2012

If you have any questions, contact the Learning Forward Business Office at 800-727-7288, or office@learningforward.org.

TEAM CHECK-UP

USE 4 GOALS TO ASSESS
A PROFESSIONAL
LEARNING COMMUNITY'S
EFFECTIVENESS

By Daniel R. Moirao, Susan C. Morris, Victor Klein, and Joyce W. Jackson

THE 4 GOALS OF EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

THE EXPERIENCES in the school districts highlighted in this article clarify a set of broad goals that all professional learning communities can use to assess their effectiveness.

Culture: Does the culture support teachers through the learning process? Are there forums for teachers to have meaningful conversations about teaching and learning? p. 33

Knowledge: Does the staff have a collective knowledge of research-based practices? Is there a common language for talking about teaching and learning? p. 34

Practice: Do teachers have opportunities to observe, talk about, and help refine each other's practice? p. 35

Achievement: Is the work having a positive impact on teacher performance and student learning? p. 36

These schools and districts have an ongoing commitment to all four goals. All of them have instituted learning clubs, established a common language, examined and refined instructional practices, and paid close attention to the impact this work has had on student achievement. Using these goals, the schools and districts provide the resources and support teachers need to become more effective educators.

The professional learning community movement has taught educators that “a collection of superstar teachers working in isolation cannot produce the same results as interdependent colleagues who share and develop professional practices together” (Garmston & Wellman, 1999, p.18).

This means that professional learning communities are key to the development, nourishment, and continued success of effective educators, an idea widely supported by research, including an extensive study conducted by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2010). Informed by their work in schools across the country, four coaches and trainers from The Thoughtful Classroom professional development program explored how four different school districts are answering a question facing all professional learning communities: How do you know your professional learning community is working?

Daniel R. Moirao (dmoirao@thoughtfulclassroom.com), **Susan C. Morris** (smorris@thoughtfulclassroom.com), **Victor Klein** (vklein@thoughtfulclassroom.com), and **Joyce W. Jackson** (jjackson@thoughtfulclassroom.com) are educational consultants and coaches who work with schools and districts throughout the United States.



SCHOOL CULTURE:

EDUCATORS SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR STUDENT LEARNING

By Daniel R. Moirao

When I began working with Cheektowaga (N.Y.) Central School District, Superintendent Dee Bonenberg told me that most teachers are used to working as independent contractors, isolated from each other and from professional conversations that improve teaching and learning. Bonenberg made it a top priority to focus the district's efforts on developing a culture based on shared responsibility for student learning. Cheektowaga's primary vehicle for creating this change has been learning clubs.

A learning club is a team of four to eight teachers who meet regularly to discuss and refine their instructional practices. Learning clubs are informed by the research of Joyce and Showers (2002), which shows that, under typical conditions, less than 10% of what teachers learn in workshops finds its way into the classroom. When schools build the right kind of support system, the level of classroom implementation changes dramatically, from less than 10% to more than 90%.

Learning clubs change school culture because they encourage teacher behaviors that increase responsibility for student learning and effect high levels of transfer to the classroom. In Cheektowaga, these teacher behaviors are expressed as learning club

commitments:

- The commitment to meet regularly and devote focused energy and time to mastering research-based strategies.
- The commitment to use these strategies in the classroom and reflect on the results as a team. Whenever Cheektowaga's learning clubs try a new strategy in the classroom, each teacher takes time to brag about success and bemoan the obstacles faced during implementation. Learning clubs use these strategies to guide discussion. Teachers help each other look for ways to increase success and overcome obstacles.
- The commitment to use student work to improve instruction. Teachers collect work samples reflecting a range of achievement levels to assess the strategy's impact and make decisions about what to work on next.

Such commitments need to be backed by a district-wide commitment to collaborative professional learning. Cheektowaga's current superintendent, Dennis Kane, has carried on this commitment. Kane, the district staff, and the teachers talk about Cheektowaga's evolution from a group of independent contractors to a culture unified around shared responsibility for helping all students succeed. ■

KNOWLEDGE:

SCHOOLS NEED A COMMON LANGUAGE FOR TALKING ABOUT INSTRUCTION

By Susan C. Morris

During a coaching visit to Silver Creek (N.Y.) Central Schools, I discussed great teaching with a group of teachers. We agreed that what sets great teachers apart is their deep understanding of the art and science of teaching. Great teachers develop a repertoire of research-based strategies (the science of teaching), and they are able to sculpt these strategies to meet a variety of classroom goals (the art of teaching).

To help all teachers develop this level of expertise, schools need a common language, a vehicle for talking about the research on instruction that has emerged over the past four decades. Research and classroom practice have yielded profound knowledge about which strategies have the greatest impact. In Silver Creek, these strategies are known as “best bets” because they are the best bets teachers can make in their quest to improve student learning. To help teachers develop their repertoires of best bets, Silver Creek has invested its energy in:

1. Training in research-based strategies, including Reading for Meaning, Interactive Lecture, and Task Rotation;

2. Learning clubs, where teachers meet regularly to discuss, plan, refine, and explore classroom applications of these strategies; and
3. A common library of instructional resources, including Strategic Teacher PLC Guides (Silver, 2010; Silver & Perini, 2010; Silver, Morris, & Klein, 2010; Silver, Jackson, & Moirao, 2011; Silver, Dewing, & Perini, 2012), which guide learning clubs through the process of learning, planning, and implementing proven research-based strategies.

This is how Silver Creek is building a common instructional language. With a common language anchoring substantive discussions about how to improve practice, the best kind of professional development emerges: Teachers talking to teachers about teaching. That’s what’s happening in Silver Creek. As Rich Norton, a 6th-grade social studies teacher, puts it, “The Thoughtful Classroom (professional development) gives us a common language to unite us as we tackle the Common Core. We are able to have more thoughtful, meaningful, and deeper conversations that help us to be more effective teachers and learners.” ■

REFERENCES

Garmston, R.J. & Wellman, B.M. (1999). *The adaptive school: A sourcebook for developing collaborative groups.* Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

Joyce, B. & Showers, B. (2002). *Student achievement through staff development* (3rd ed.). Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

MetLife. (2010). *The MetLife survey of the American teacher: Collaborating for student success.* New York: Author.

National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future. (2010). *Team up for 21st century teaching and learning: What research and practice reveal about professional learning.* Washington, DC: Author.

Silver, H.F. (2010). *Compare & contrast: Teaching comparative thinking to strengthen student learning.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Silver, H.F., Dewing, R.T., & Perini, M.J. (2012). *Inference: Teaching students to develop hypotheses, evaluate evidence, and draw logical conclusions.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Silver, H.F., Jackson, J.W., & Moirao, D.M. (2011). *Task rotation: Strategies for differentiating activities and assessments by learning style.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Silver, H.F., Morris, S.C., & Klein, V. (2010). *Reading for meaning: How to build students’ comprehension, reasoning, and problem-solving skills.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Silver, H.F. & Perini, M.J. (2010). *The interactive lecture: How to engage students, build memory, and deepen comprehension.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Silver, H.F. & Strong, R.W. (2004). *Learning style inventory for students.* Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ: Thoughtful Education Press.

Silver Strong & Associates. (2005). *The CRAFT of leadership: An administrator’s guide to the thoughtful classroom.* Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ: Author.

Thoughtful Education Press. (2007). *Questioning styles and strategies: How to use questions to engage and motivate different styles of learners.* Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ: Author.

Webb, N.L. (1997). *Criteria for alignment of expectations and assessments in mathematics and science education* (Council of Chief State School Officers and National Institute for Science Education Research Monograph No. 6). Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Center for Education Research. ■

CLASSROOM PRACTICE:

TEACHER ROUNDS CREATE COLLEGIAL LEARNING

By Victor Klein

Performers practice, athletes practice, doctors have rounds, and they all receive feedback from colleagues. In schools, however, practice occurs in what Garmston and Wellman (1999) call a “zone of isolation.” Today’s teachers spend more than 90% of their in-school time separated from their peers (MetLife, 2010).

In the Sweet Home Central School District in Amherst, N.Y., Superintendent Anthony Day and I proposed doing teacher rounds. The initial response from teachers was panic at the thought of teaching in front of other teachers. We explained that this was a collaborative event — planned, delivered, and discussed in a supportive environment. Each group of four or five grade-level or subject-area teachers would:

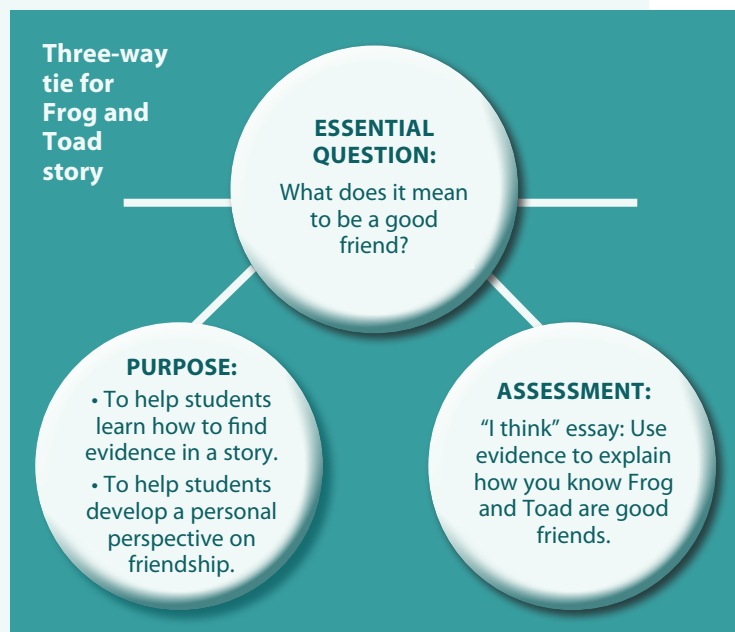
- Choose a content focus for a lesson;
- Determine the lesson’s purpose, essential questions, and assessment;
- Select a strategy and plan the lesson;
- Teach the lesson as a team in one teacher’s classroom, with each teacher delivering one segment of the lesson; and
- Reflect on what happened, using student work to evaluate the lesson’s effectiveness.

Working together as a team of designers, we ensured congruity between the purpose of the lesson, the essential question, and the final assessment using a tool called Three-Way Tie. See an example of how primary teachers might use Three-Way Tie as a lesson alignment tool at right.

With the final assessment and overall purpose guiding our thinking, we planned the lesson by answering four design questions:

- How will new information be presented?
- How will students develop the knowledge and skills they need to succeed on the assessment?
- How will students reflect on what they’ve learned?
- How will the lesson be introduced in a way that captures student interest?

This well-defined planning structure allowed teachers to focus on what was happening during the implementation of the round. During our post-lesson reflection, teachers realized they had made a huge shift in thinking. Instead of being concerned with supervision, checklists,



and criticism, they had created an experience of collegial learning. Teachers commented that as the round unfolded, they thought less about what they had to cover and more about what they helped students uncover. Most were eager to participate again. More than 90% of participating teachers have found teacher rounds to be an overwhelmingly positive experience.

“Teacher rounds have fostered districtwide collaboration and professional learning, created consistency, and helped my teachers implement more complex strategies in the classroom,” Day said. “Today, I can see varied strategies such as Reading for Meaning, Interactive Lecture, Task Rotation, and tools like Three-Way Tie in place as natural parts of the classroom teacher’s repertoire.”

The superintendent isn’t alone in his praise for teacher rounds, as middle school teacher Kelly Corcoran explains: “Participating in teacher rounds has been the most effective professional development in my career thus far. All of the lessons we have created through teacher rounds have increased student engagement and excitement for learning, as well as improved test scores on local and state assessments. I believe I am a better educator because I am part of a professional learning community that has had the opportunity to participate in many teacher rounds.” ■

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT:

STRATEGIES PROMOTE DIVERSE FORMS OF THINKING

By Joyce W. Jackson

Principal Gigi Mauney of Lewis County High School in Vanceburg, Ky., believes in looking at the work of school two ways. One is to focus on student achievement — on how well students are learning. The other focus is on improving teachers’ craft, looking for answers to questions such as: Does the work teachers assign develop the kind of thinking found in the Common Core State Standards? Do teachers promote diverse forms of thinking that prepare students for college and careers in the 21st century?

To help her school increase its capacity to focus on student achievement and improvement instruction, Mauney selected a school monitoring tool called a Learning SWEEP (Silver Strong & Associates, 2005). Mauney and I worked with each department to implement the tool as follows:

Select a focus. Mauney and the staff established two goals: Align instructional practices with the higher-order thinking demands of the Common Core, and promote diverse forms of thinking.

Write down the “look-fors.” Department teams relied

on two models: *Questioning Styles and Strategies* (Thoughtful Education Press, 2007) to help evaluate the different kinds of styles of questions and thinking tasks used in the classroom and Norman Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* (1997) to assess the sophistication of student thinking. We converted these ideas into a checklist for each classroom.

Examine the work assigned to students. Teachers from each department collected samples of student work and classroom questions for three consecutive days and organized the work into folders.

Evaluate the degree to which the work is aligned to the goals. Using the look-fors from the checklist, teams analyzed student work, noting how well assigned work supported the goals and what patterns in student achievement revealed about instructional practice.

Plan a course of action. To plan their next steps, teams asked, “What do we need to do more of to achieve our school’s goals?” Two answers emerged:

- If we want to improve student learning, we must be more intentional and thoughtful when planning and using higher-order thinking questions in the classroom.

- If we want our students to find relevance and meaning in school, we need to provide questions, assignments, and tasks that promote more diverse forms of thinking that are aligned with Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* and Silver and Strong’s (2004) model of learning styles.

Teams focused on improving classroom questioning. Teachers created individual growth plans, implemented questioning tools and strategies in their classrooms, collected samples of work to analyze student progress regularly, and established a time frame for conducting another Learning SWEEP to monitor the group’s overall progress.

According to Mauney, this commitment to looking closely at what’s happening in classrooms has led to real improvement in student learning. Between 2009 and 2011, student performance in reading, mathematics, and especially writing has trended upward. For the on-demand writing portion of the Kentucky Commonwealth Accountability Testing System, the percentage of students achieving at the two highest performance levels more than doubled, from 22.4% to 46.7%. ■

LOOK-FORS CHECKLIST					
LOOK-FORS	Work sample	Work sample	Work sample	Work sample	Total
QUESTIONING STYLES AND STRATEGIES					
Mastery questions: Remembering key content and performing skills accurately.					
Understanding questions: Reasoning and thinking conceptually.					
Self-expressive questions: Imagining, innovating, and creating.					
Interpersonal questions: Relating to content personally and making real-world connections.					
WEBB’S DEPTH OF KNOWLEDGE					
Level 1: Recall					
Level 2: Skills and concepts					
Level 3: Strategic thinking					
Level 4: Extended thinking					

Stronger Systems. Deeper Learning. Powerful Results.



DID YOU KNOW?

Independent research confirms school improvement services from the Center for Results lead to significant achievement gains in low-performing schools.

A University of Arkansas study found that schools in Indiana that worked with the Center for Results outperformed other schools in the state, posting nearly twice the gains in English language arts and mathematics achievement.

Collaborate with the Center for Results to bring Learning Forward's research and body of knowledge in effective professional learning to improve teaching and student achievement in your schools.

The Center for Results offers high-impact consulting and programs, providing the tools and technical support to transform professional learning and increase educator capacity for lasting improvements in student achievement.

For more information, contact:

Director M. René Islas, rene.islas@learningforward.org

Consultant Services Coordinator Sue Francis, sue.francis@learningforward.org

202-630-1489 • www.learningforward.org/results





GIVE TEAMS *a* RUNNING START

TAKE STEPS TO BUILD SHARED VISION, TRUST, AND COLLABORATION SKILLS

By Jane A.G. Kise

When an educator tells me, “We’re doing professional learning communities this year,” that phrasing makes me wonder whether they’re simply forming new small groups or undertaking the multiyear effort it takes to move teachers from working as individuals to the deep collaboration that marks effective, sustainable professional learning communities.

Consider for a moment how launching a professional learning community is similar to starting a race. Athletes know the danger of false starts — moving before the starting signal. Until recently, a false start meant that all racers returned to the blocks to begin again, their adrenalin gone, their concentration broken. Because these effects could influence race results, the rules changed. Races continue, and competitors who false start learn only at the end that they’ve been disqualified.

When professional learning communities have a false start, no one blows a whistle, but members’ initial energy for collaboration can dissipate when they run into



all-too-common barriers such as lack of clarity around vision and purpose, trust issues, or insufficient time available for the scope of the undertaking, to name a few. These barriers to effective collaboration are real, yet school leaders who aren't aware of the multistage nature of professional learning community initiatives often launch them before working to remove these impediments.

DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many (2010) point out that “organizations that take the plunge and actually begin *doing* the work of a PLC develop their capacity to help all students learn at high levels far more effectively than schools that spend years *preparing* to become PLCs through reading or even training” (p. 10). Targeting three key barriers — lack of shared vision, trust, and collaboration skills — can remove hurdles while at the same time beginning, or re-energizing, the work of professional learning communities.

ENERGIZE PERSONAL VISION AND BELIEF

First, leaders must work to ensure that every professional learning community member sees the value of time spent in these meetings, avoiding the false start of setting an ineffective vision. From their longitudinal study of more than one million leaders, Kouzes and Posner (2010) found that top-down visions seldom energize change efforts. “Leaders must be able to sense the purpose in others. What people really want to hear is not

the leader's vision. They want to hear about how their own aspirations will be met. They want to hear how their dreams will come true and their hopes will be realized. They want to see themselves in the picture of the future that the leader is painting. The very best leaders understand that it's about inspiring a *shared* vision, not about selling their own idiosyncratic views of the world” (p. 68).

Yes, it takes time for professional learning community members to reach consensus around a vision, but doing so can make the difference between teachers believing that collaboration is key to student achievement or seeing no value in professional learning communities.

The vision process begins with school leadership. At one school I worked with, the professional learning community leadership team, including several teachers, set the following parameters:

- Professional learning community teams will collaborate on looking at data and/or student work.
- Professional learning community team initiatives will tie to the year's professional development emphasis of improving student achievement by increasing critical thinking.

These parameters ensured a consistent schoolwide focus but allowed teams to concentrate on their unique interests and concerns. For example, the mathematics team was frustrated by how quickly students gave up when given word problems.

Their vision involved turning students into “persistent problem solvers” when assigned rigorous tasks. Other teams focused on asking more rigorous questions, critical thinking in assessments, and other variations on the overall vision.

While involving *everyone* in creating a vision may seem cumbersome, here is one method leaders can use.

1. Ask each professional learning community team to use the parameters leadership sets out to craft the team’s vision. To do so:
 - a. Cut flip chart paper into long strips and give one to each team member. Each person drafts a statement on his or her strip with a marker so that it can be read from a few feet away.
 - b. When all team members have finished, place all the strips on a table or tape them to a wall where everyone can read them. Hold a discussion regarding themes, similarities, and differences, using prompts designed to foster positive debate, such as:
 - i. I noticed that ...
 - ii. I like the word ...
 - iii. I wonder about ...
 - iv. What if we combined/substituted/added ...
 - c. Teams of five to six may be able to reach consensus during this discussion. For larger teams, break into groups of three to four and ask each group to craft a new draft statement, based on the discussion. Often, these are close enough in wording for the group to come to overall agreement after a quick discussion.
2. Teams submit their vision statements to school leadership. The leadership team uses the same process to draft an overall vision statement for the school, first discussing the values and concerns reflected in the team statements. Then each member drafts a statement individually. The group follows the above discussion protocol to come to consensus on wording.
3. The leadership team may decide to hold one more professional learning community meeting, asking for suggestions for any wording adjustments. This allows each person to have input on wording that will make the statement motivational for him or her.

BUILD TRUST

A second cause of many professional learning community false starts is assuming that current relationships are healthy and have the level of trust needed for teachers to share what is and isn’t working in their classroom. Hargreaves (2002) found that the emotion teachers most often associate with their coworkers is betrayal — a difficult place from which to share classroom practices. Further, bringing teachers together often unearths issues kept at bay when they worked in isolation.

Many shared leadership teams are aware of relationship difficulties among staff members. Because of the crucial role of

trust, leaders should consider investing the small amount of time needed to use a secure, web-based survey such as www.surveymonkey.com to ask teachers for feedback on statements such as:

- I’m comfortable having other teachers observe my classroom.
- If I share lesson plans or samples of student work, I trust that my colleagues will provide helpful, nonjudgmental feedback.
- Existing conflicts among staff may interfere with professional learning community work.
- Some teachers on our team hold more power than others (Kise & Russell, 2010, p. 87).

If deep issues exist, leaders should consider launching professional learning communities with the help of an outside consultant versed in conflict resolution. More often than not, conflicts and issues of trust arise from misunderstandings of how colleagues learn and communicate. Time invested in clearing up these misunderstandings speeds rather than delays creating effective professional learning community teams.

Here are three activities leaders can use to build trust even as educators begin to collaborate.

Key article discussion. The leader chooses an article related to the overall professional learning community vision. To keep conversation respectful and focused on the text, introduce an effective discussion protocol. One that works well — and that teachers can use with students — is a protocol called Save the Last Word for Me. (Find this protocol along with others for discussing texts in the March 2012 issue of *The Leading Teacher*, available at www.learningforward.org/news/teacher.)

Using “outside” work. The leader gathers samples of student work, lesson plans, assessments, or rubrics created by teachers at other schools — or work that the leader creates — for teams’ first experiences with collaborative conversations. Critiquing outside work instead of each other’s practices often prompts sharing honest opinions.

Video observations. Use team time to watch a video clip of a teacher. The leader sets a clear focus for discussing the film clip, such as, “What moves does this teacher make and why?” “What evidence is there of students being asked to justify answers?” “How does this teacher encourage student-to-student interaction?” The leader’s goal is to demonstrate how such a focus keeps observations informative rather than critical, as well as how much one can learn from observing another teacher.

TEACH COLLABORATION

Few people are born with the skills needed to listen, weigh different opinions, look for agreement, and work for the common good. Hargreaves (2007), Hord (2004), and Grossman,

WHAT ARE OUR NEEDS FOR COLLABORATION?

Directions: Groups generally include people with different informational and processing needs.

Note: These ideas are loosely based on the framework provided by personality type, popularized through the Myers Briggs Type Indicator.

	USING ONE COLOR of a highlighter pen, mark items on this chart that you might keep in mind to improve your own collaboration skills.
	IN ANOTHER COLOR, highlight items that the team might consider as you set norms together to improve team communication and efficiency.

Some people like to talk things out. Others would rather think things through. Which of these suggestions might make you or your group more productive?	
	Set agendas and distribute written materials or data to be discussed before meetings so that everyone can be prepared to talk.
	After discussing ideas, have team members do a two-minute quick write about their conclusions or “aha” moments, then share.
	Have someone record large group notes — flip charts, whiteboards, Smart Boards — so that everyone can more easily track conversations.
	Use a five-second rule. Wait five seconds after posing a question or making a statement before someone responds, allowing all a chance to form thoughts.

To ensure that your team pays attention to important details and proven methodologies while also seeking to innovate and imagine new ideas, consider these suggestions.	
	Ask, “Are there options we haven’t considered?” Use analogies to prompt new ideas.
	Seek ideas that have immediate classroom applications, tying changes to current or past practices.
	Tie suggested practices to theories and trends in education — the big picture.
	Think long term (the 24-month goal) while also seeking useful, measurable results (the one-month goal).

To ensure that decisions include logical, objective criteria and more subjective criteria such as individual needs or student voices, consider these suggestions.	
	Assume that suggestions and ideas will be debated. Don’t take it personally.
	Look for and acknowledge points of agreement as well as flaws.
	Practice stepping into others’ shoes to understand their viewpoints, including the views of students, administrators, and other teachers.
	Include stories of student success or failure, as well as objective data, when making instructional decisions.

To balance the need for working efficiently within tight time frames with staying flexible to consider emerging information, consider these suggestions.	
	Set meeting agendas that allow flexibility for extended conversations.
	Schedule time to revisit goals. Are they the right ones? Do they need to change?
	Allow flexibility in how members will carry out group decisions.
	Plan backward from group deadlines to ensure that each person knows when to start.

Wineburg, & Woolworth (2001) found that teachers struggle to collaborate deeply to improve teaching practices. The following activities help lay the groundwork.

Listen to how each person describes worthwhile meetings. The chart on p. 41 provides a useful tool for building understanding and setting norms before communication problems arise. Team members use one color to highlight items they want to keep in mind to improve their own collaboration skills. In another color, they highlight items they think might suggest key group norms. The group then discusses the suggestions and comes to agreement. This helps teams go beyond generic norms such as, “We will start on time,” to ones that match their particular group’s dynamics.

How will leaders know if it’s working? Professional learning community members will view their time together as key to improving student success.

Focus tasks. Many key professional learning community activities, such as examining student work, can be focused to demonstrate the value of collaboration. For example, I often have teachers begin with a sample set of student work from a common math assessment, asking them to use a rubric

to rate student ability to explain their reasoning. Participants quickly realize that by avoiding other topics such as task design, accuracy, or appropriateness, they quickly gain new insights into how to assess student reasoning.

Vision, trust, and collaboration skills are essential if professional learning communities are to go the distance, yet leaders can start collaborative work while laying this equally essential foundation. How will leaders know if it’s working? Professional learning community members will view their time together as

key to improving student success, which is, after all, the true goal of a professional learning community.

REFERENCES

DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T. (2010). *Learning by doing: A handbook for professional learning communities at work* (2nd ed.). Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Grossman, P., Wineburg, S., & Woolworth, S. (2001). Toward a theory of teacher community. *Teachers College Record*, 103(6), 942-1012.

Hargreaves, A. (2002). Teaching and betrayal. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 8(3/4) 394-407.

Hargreaves, A. (2007). Sustainable professional learning communities. In L. Stoll & K.S. Louis (Eds.), *Professional learning communities: Divergence, depth and dilemmas* (pp. 181-195). New York: Open University Press.

Hord, S. (2004). *Learning together, leading together: Changing schools through professional learning communities*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Kise, J.A.G. & Russell, B. (2010). *Creating a coaching culture for professional learning communities*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Kouzes, J. M. & Posner, B.Z. (2010). *The truth about leadership: The no-fads, heart-of-the-matter facts you need to know*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

•
Jane A.G. Kise (jane@janekise.com) is an educational consultant, specializing in team building, coaching, and differentiated instruction, especially in mathematics. Her latest book, with co-author Beth Russell, is *Creating a Coaching Culture for Professional Learning Communities* (Solution Tree, 2010). ■

Where principals dare to dream

Continued from p. 30

example, about budgets and personnel issues — but also, more importantly, to “check in on their dreams” — to keep alive a vision of teaching, learning, and leadership that transcends the daily routine of a principal’s work. So the Critical Friends Group continues to meet and learn together about leading. In fall 2012, we will begin year eight.

REFERENCES

Annenberg Institute for School Reform. (1997). *National School Reform Faculty: Theory and constructs*. Providence, RI: Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

Fahey, K. (2011, January). Still learning about leading: A leadership Critical Friends Group. *Journal of Research in*

Leadership Education, 6(1), 1-35.

Mitgang, L. & Maeroff, G. (2008, June). *Becoming a leader: Preparing school principals for today’s schools*. New York: The Wallace Foundation.

McDonald, J., Mohr, N., Dichter, A., & McDonald, E. (2007). *The power of protocols: An educator’s guide to better practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

School Reform Initiative. (2010). *School reform initiative resource book*. Denver, CO: SRI.

•
Kevin Fahey (kfahey@salemstate.edu) is associate professor at Salem State University in Salem, Mass., and co-author of *Leadership for Powerful Learning* (Teachers College Press, in press). ■

REBEL WITH *a* CAUSE

**A PIONEER IN THE FIELD REFLECTS
ON THE EVOLUTION OF PROFESSIONAL
LEARNING COMMUNITIES**



Carlene U. Murphy sees three stages in her 14 years as lead staff developer in Augusta, Ga.

By Carlene U. Murphy

A revolution took place in staff development in the late 1980s and into the 1990s. It was not reported on the evening news. Very few knew it was happening. I was a rebel, along with others I had not yet met, in the rebellion that resulted in learning communities, the dominant form of professional development today.

In 1978, the superintendent asked me to fill a new position that he planned to recommend to the board of education. This position was director of staff development. “What would I do?” I asked. “You have the opportunity to determine the scope of the job,” the superintendent told me. I was awed with the prospect, yet questioned whether staff development could be justified to the board as a full-time position. I found few resources. Professional publications heavily favored curriculum development. Nobody

else in Georgia held a position with such a title. There were no academies to provide support. The state department of education was developing staff development guidelines for local leaders that I found helpful. It would be 1980 before I attended an event sponsored by the National Staff Development Council (now Learning Forward). Once the position was approved, I set out to discover what I needed to know and be skillful in doing to do my job.

A CHANGING ROLE

I view the 14 years I served as the lead staff developer in Augusta, Ga., in three stages. For the first few years, I was a logistics organizer, designer of credit activities, registrar, and contractor for speakers and presenters. The second stage was the push for school-based staff development — not to be confused with establishing learning communities. Principals requested funding for motivational speakers and workshop presenters. I now added critiquer of plans and banker to my repertoire. As the state began paying stipends for credits earned, I became a more accomplished accoun-

tant and bookkeeper. As the state mandated specific courses teachers were to take to renew certificates and local boards mandated credit hours for maintaining tenure, I found the No. 1 concern of teachers coming to my office was whether or not they were in compliance with regulations.

I saw a dullness in teachers' eyes as they stood before me with papers in hand to register for both district and school offerings. My reports for numbers of teachers and administrators involved in department activities were impressive. The district received accolades from state leaders and national organizations. Yet I knew something wasn't working. I knew student achievement in the district was, at best, standing still. As I visited classrooms and observed teachers preparing materials in the district's teacher center, there was no evidence that the resources being put into training activities were having an impact on students.

The third stage began in 1986, when my frustration with the status quo was at its highest, and, lucky for me, I was in the right place at the right time. Georgia was increasing its staff development funds to local districts at the same time I was chairperson of the National Staff Development Council's 1986 Annual Conference. Feeling the mounting pressure of accountability, I made the most of my personal connections to leaders in the field who would be presenting at the national conference. Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers spoke about the need to increase student achievement through staff development (Joyce & Showers, 2001). I realized I had to change how I worked. With this realization, I became a staff development rebel.

I rebelled against the traditional role I had assumed. I had a superintendent who was willing to hire Joyce and Showers as consultants for a three-year period and to allow me to spend at least 50% of my time with three faculties for one year, adding additional schools in years two and three (Murphy, 1992). We wanted to document how teacher learning is tied to student learning, how changing teaching behaviors changes student behaviors. At the time, I had no idea that we had set our eyes on climbing the Mount Everest of professional development. I had a new purpose, and plans for the remainder of my career took a sharp turn in a new direction. These years would be spent assisting district and school leaders in developing strategies for organizing whole faculties into learning units focused on what students need for teachers to do. I was a rebel with a cause.

NO MODEL TO FOLLOW

In 1986, "professional learning communities" was not a term used within the staff development community. In specific schools we targeted, our district broke new ground in expecting every faculty member to be in a study group (Murphy, 1992) with no more than five members using student achievement

as its measure of effectiveness. The six years before I retired from my home district were years of learning how to work with whole faculties in small groups working on student instructional needs. We had not found any schools in the nation doing what we were doing in our district in 1987. We had no model to follow. As I left the district in 1992 to become a consultant working with faculties throughout the country, I found that few knew what to do to make the connection between staff development and student achievement. The "how" was still fuzzy to me. To those who called for help, I said, "We'll learn more together." As it had been with me, school and district leaders everywhere were struggling to meet the needs of teachers and students through archaic staff development systems. More funding brought pressure and high expectations from local boards of education, state departments, and federal agencies.

STAFF DEVELOPERS AS EXPLORERS

I share this look into my past because I think it mirrors how the field of professional development has evolved over the past 30 years. We experienced a staff development revolution in the mid-1980s through the 1990s. Every issue of *Journal of Staff Development* brought stories of new "discoveries." Staff developers were explorers. We explored new ways of working and tried what we heard others were doing successfully. We had little research to guide us — we were doing the research ourselves, doing what had not yet been written. Administrators wanted research to back up their decision making, and we had little to give them, except what we had just done. We had studies in training that Joyce and Showers had done with teachers attending summer institutes at the university level (Joyce & Showers, 1983). When we began in 1987, an assistant superintendent in my district asked me, "Where has what you are proposing been proven to increase student achievement?" I replied, "California." He didn't push for more. Dare I have said nowhere? We confronted disbelievers: Why should every teacher at a school participate in a study group? Isn't this un-American? Teachers wondered why they were expected to share their secrets of good teaching with other teachers. A nationally known leader challenged me on the point of "whole faculty." Another challenged me on the idea that staff developers should be accountable for student learning. How can that be? We don't work with students. Those of us in the middle of the revolution often felt attacked and defensive. However, we prevailed, and new leaders in professional development today have volumes of research to wade through, many books telling them what to do, and consultants with various backgrounds eager to guide them.

WHOLE-FACULTY STUDY GROUPS

After retiring from my hometown district in 1992, I continued the work in districts across the country. I worked with faculties eager to take control of their own learning. I called the

Continued on p. 52

I share this look into my past because I think it mirrors how the field of professional development has evolved over the past 30 years.

UNPACKING THE STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



Facilitator Guide: Standards for Professional Learning

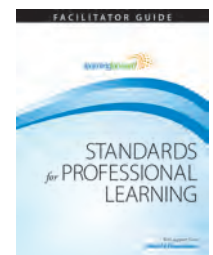
Designed to assist facilitators in introducing and helping others implement the standards, this guide is for educators new to the Standards for Professional Learning as well as those familiar with the previous Standards for Staff Development. The guide includes practical activities, reflection questions, and tools to deepen users' understanding of the standards and how effective professional learning leads to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results.

With many interactive learning opportunities for participant discussion, conversation, and involvement, this guide models the kind of professional learning described in the standards. The tasks, discussion questions, and tools frame reflections and dialogue about the standards and provide opportunities to apply them in users' own work.

The guide is divided into nine units that are organized to support a full-day learning session on the standards with suggested variations for a two-hour introduction. Facilitators can also adapt the units to suit their particular schedules and learners.

The facilitator guide is free to Learning Forward members and website visitors.

Download the guide at www.learningforward.org/standards/facilitatorguide.cfm.



<p>Learning communities can use this tool to gain a deeper understanding of the Standards for Professional Learning.</p>	<p>PURPOSE</p> <p>The purpose of unpacking the Standards for Professional Learning is to explore the essential components that describe what educators should know and be able to do for effective professional learning.</p>	
<p>MATERIALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A copy of the Standards for Professional Learning for each team member • A copy of the charts on pp. 46-47 for each team member • Writing instruments • Chart paper • Markers 	<p>TIME</p> <p>30 minutes</p>	
<p>SUGGESTED PROCESS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assign one standard to each member of the group. 2. Ask team members to read their assigned standard, including the introduction and elaboration. While reading, team members can use the chart on p. 46 to make note of the core elements, topics, and skills, as well as any questions prompted by their reading. 3. Once all team members have completed their reading, have the group discuss key points and insights while working collaboratively to create and post a chart, using the windowpane template on p. 47 as a guide. 		

Source: Learning Forward. (2012). *Facilitator guide: Standards for Professional Learning*. Oxford, OH: Author.

UNPACKING THE STANDARDS



Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students

3 core elements	Topics (KNOW)	Skills (DO)

What questions were you prompted to think about?

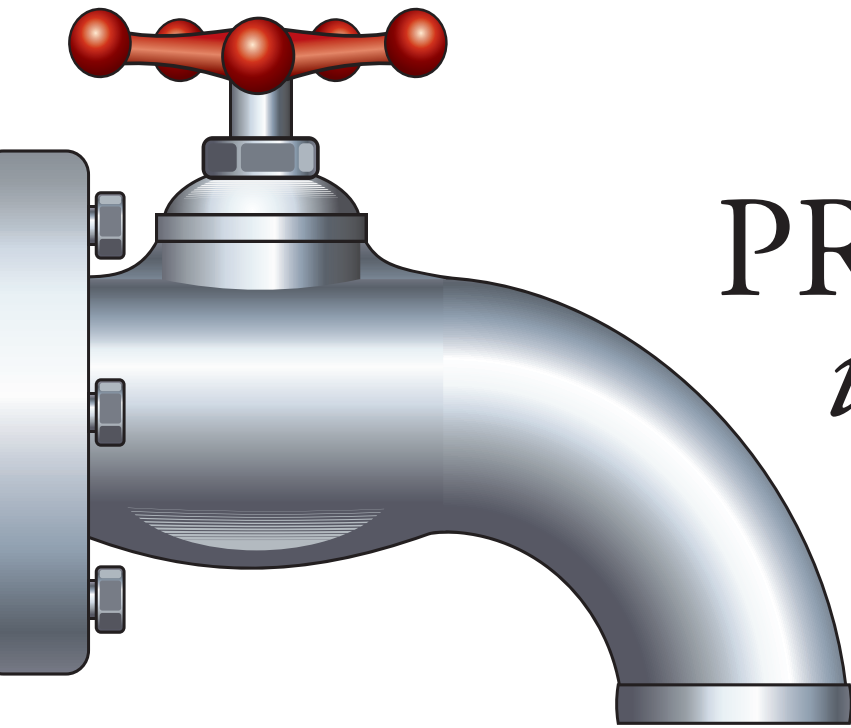
Source: Ainsworth, L. (2003). *“Unwrapping” the standards: A simple process to make standards manageable*. Denver, CO: Advanced Learning Press.

STANDARDS WINDOWPANE TEMPLATE

Standard _____

<p>Key points</p> <p>What information or ideas are important to know about this standard?</p>	<p>Standards in practice</p> <p>Which behaviors are observable when this standard is fully implemented?</p>
<p>Symbol</p> <p>What visual representation would help people remember this standard?</p>	<p>Next steps</p> <p>What steps are necessary to implement this standard?</p>

Source: Learning Forward (2012). *Facilitator guide: Standards for Professional Learning*. Oxford, OH: Author.



PRINCIPALS *in the* PIPELINE

**DISTRICTS CONSTRUCT A FRAMEWORK
TO DEVELOP SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

“Attention, job seekers. Log on to your computers and watch the 20-minute video of the teacher giving a math lesson. Then write a memo to the teacher, critiquing her work. Make sure that what you say is informed by our outline of what principals need to focus on when observing instruction — such as whether students are engaged, how much time is allotted for discussion, and the fit between class activities and ideas being taught.

“Before committing your answer to paper, think carefully. The quality of your memo — along with your performance on the other tasks in our revamped hiring procedure — will determine whether you land a job as a school principal in Prince George’s County, one of the nation’s largest school districts.”

By Pamela Mendels

The words are made up, but what they describe is not: the tough test that would-be principals encounter when they apply for a job in Prince George’s County, Md. A diverse school district hugging the eastern border of Washington, D.C., Prince George’s County has introduced rigorous hiring methods and other practices to boost the quality of leadership in its 198 schools. In so doing, the district has also earned a spot among the pioneers in efforts nationally to ensure that public schools are led by the best principals possible.

“We think the most critical interaction in schools is

between the teacher and the student, but second to that is leadership in the building,” says Douglas Anthony, director of human capital management for the county, which, with 125,000 students, ranks among the 20 biggest school districts in the U.S. “Making sure we have great leadership in each building is of the utmost importance. That’s why this work is so crucial.”

Prince George’s County is one of six school districts taking part in a six-year, \$75 million initiative to establish strong principal “pipelines” — local systems ensuring that a large corps of school leaders is properly trained, hired, and developed on the job. The initiative was launched and financed by The Wallace Foundation, a philanthropy that, since 2000, has supported efforts nationwide to promote better school leadership. Selected from more than

90 school districts working on better leadership, Prince George's County and the other five grantee districts — Charlotte-Mecklenburg, N.C.; Denver, Colo.; Gwinnett County, Ga.; Hillsborough County, Fla., and New York City — were invited to take part in the initiative because they had particularly strong efforts under way. The Wallace funding is helping bolster their work. The districts will also be part of a major Wallace-funded independent evaluation to see whether pipelines make a difference in student achievement and how others can use the lessons from the districts' efforts.

The key idea behind the initiative is that obtaining effective principals requires four essential elements: principal standards, high-quality training, selective hiring, and a combination of solid on-the-job support and performance evaluation, especially for new hires. These may seem like common sense, but until recently, leadership was an afterthought for most districts and, as a consequence, important pipeline elements were either insufficient or missing altogether.

Now, several factors are changing the old scenario. One is government policy. Washington has begun recognizing the importance of school leadership through funding efforts, including Race to the Top and School Improvement Grants, and states have taken actions, including the adoption or adaptation of standards for principals developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (CCSSO, 2008). Another factor is research. Studies in recent years have confirmed that leadership ranks second only to teacher quality among school influences on student learning (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010, p. 9). At the same time, in response to criticism that much of the university training and professional development principals receive is inadequate, researchers have determined what high-quality training, before and on the job, should look like (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007).

These factors combined have educators and policymakers looking intently at what they can do to promote school leadership. "Too often, we sit and wait for that 'superprincipal' to show up and lead a school," says John Youngquist, director of principal talent development in Denver and a former high school principal. "...With the level of leadership turnover our urban schools are experiencing, we need a strategy that is no longer based on hope, but on action."

The Wallace grantee districts are taking that action in varied efforts, but all share a conviction that the four pipeline parts need to fit together securely for the system to work. "Evaluation is important, but if you don't define leadership standards, how do you know what to assess?" asks Tricia McManus, director of leadership development

with Hillsborough County Public Schools, which encompasses Tampa and is the nation's eighth-largest district. "... You can't have one component without the other."

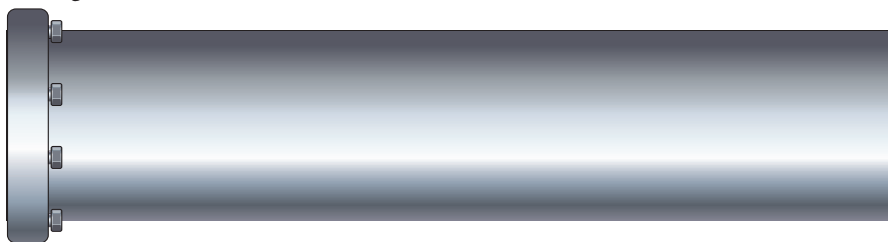
PRINCIPAL STANDARDS: Districts create clear, rigorous job requirements detailing what principals and assistant principals must know and do.

Standards for principals are the foundation on which everything else rests, says Youngquist in Denver. Ideally, standards reflect district needs and underpin what's taught to those enrolled in principal training programs, what's looked for in job candidates, what's built upon in professional development, and what's assessed in on-the-job performance evaluations. "The framework," says Youngquist, using the local term for Denver's set of standards, "provides a base upon which we will build priorities and monitor the effectiveness of the learning opportunities that we are providing over time."

New York City, the nation's largest school district with more than 1 million students, is among the Wallace-supported districts taking a close look at standards to see if they serve the rest of the pipeline well. Currently, the city's standards exist in a one-page school leadership competencies chart on the New York City Department of Education website. The document lists and defines core competencies of the principal in five areas, ranging from personal leadership to resources and operations, and then spells out what these competencies look like.

This year, the department is updating the standards to reflect the field's evolving understanding of what it means to be a good principal, says Anthony Conelli, deputy chief academic officer for the city's education department. Conelli cites one example: giving teachers and others an important role in leadership. The current standards make a glancing reference to this, saying that the effective principal "shares responsibilities appropriately." In recent years, reviews of New York City schools conducted by outside observers have found that leadership "distributed" in serious ways among the adults in a school build-

This article is sponsored by The Wallace Foundation.



ing is a key aspect of school quality — and principals can ensure (or not) that it happens. That suggests that the standards may require a stronger statement about what some educators call “distributive leadership.” “It’s not simply saying, ‘You’re now in charge of the supply closet,’” Conelli notes. Rather, distributing leadership requires the principal to get staff involved in meaningful ways. The revised standards, he says, are likely to make the point.

HIGH-QUALITY TRAINING: Preservice principal training programs — whether run by universities, nonprofits, or districts — recruit people who show the potential to become effective principals and give them high-quality training that responds to district needs.

All the Wallace-supported districts have recognized the need to beef up training for aspiring principals. Perhaps the best-known effort among the six is the NYC Leadership Academy, a nine-year-old nonprofit that, through its training for New York City educators and work outside the city, has earned a national reputation for providing high-quality education and experiences to would-be principals. Early research suggests payoffs to the academy’s work. One study found a steeper student improvement trajectory in English and math in New York City schools led by academy-trained principals than in similar schools led by other new principals (Corcoran, Schwartz, & Weinstein, 2009, 2011).

New York isn’t the only district that has made a serious commitment to improving preservice training. Hillsborough’s work includes a program to train current principals

and assistant principals to identify teachers with leadership potential, while Prince George’s County’s efforts include a pilot leadership program developed with the National Institute for School Leadership, a for-profit arm of the nonprofit National Center on Education and the Economy, a Washington, D.C.-based education policy and development group.

In the metro Atlanta area, the Gwinnett County district’s Quality-Plus Leader Academy offers a range of leadership programs, including training for would-be principals and assistant principals. Aspiring principals take part in a yearlong program that includes nine hours of instruction per month, projects such as developing school improvement or staffing plans, and a 90-day residency in which program enrollees work with an exemplary principal. Moreover, Gwinnett, Georgia’s largest school district, has recently begun working with two local universities to redesign their leadership programs to better meet district needs.

Similarly, Charlotte-Mecklenburg is branching out from a successful partnership it formed with nearby Winthrop Univer-

sity several years ago to develop a district-university principal training program with Queens University, a second area institution. One important lesson the district has learned along the way is that strong partnerships demand clearly understood roles and duties for each partner, according to Rashidah Morgan, director of leadership strategy for the district. “The challenge is the formalization of the partnership structure, sitting down with someone and saying, ‘What do you expect of me?’ ‘What do I expect of you?’ and ‘How do we hold each other accountable?’” she says.

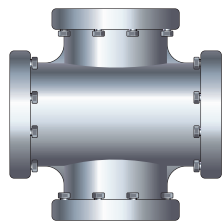
Denver, with 79,000 students, is the smallest of the Wallace grantee districts and has shown that such partnerships can take root. The 10-year-old Ritchie Program for School Leaders at the University of Denver is regarded as a model of district-university collaboration for school leadership training. It’s also an exemplar of principal preparation programs, featuring rigorous selection of applicants, a curriculum focused on the principal’s role in improving instruction, paid internships, and experienced university and district faculty members. The district, which is also home to a nonprofit that trains charter school leaders, is developing a yearlong residency program in which high-performing assistant principals will work under successful veteran principals to prepare for the top slot. “It’s time that we gain advantage from the potential leaders among us by developing this talent and growing the principals we need for our schools that desperately need them,” says Youngquist.

SELECTIVE HIRING: Districts hire well-trained candidates with the right set of characteristics to be strong school leaders.

For grantee districts, the effort to improve school leadership has brought a close examination of district hiring practices. Case in point: Prince George’s County, where, until 2011, hiring “was not based on any objective criteria and certainly was not standards-based,” according to Synthia Shilling, the district’s chief human resources officer.

Today’s three-stage hiring procedure scrutinizes candidates in ways designed to be objective enough to yield numerical scores for each job applicant. First, the candidates take the Gallup organization’s 40-minute online PrincipalInsight assessment, a tool to predict a person’s potential for success as a principal. The better-scoring candidates then move to the principal exercise described in part at the beginning of this article. In addition to producing the teacher memo, job seekers must write descriptions of how they would respond to five different problems, such as the pipes burst on the first day of school or a teacher falls short in a test-prep session. The job candidates who make the cut then face their third task: interviewing with three to four principal supervisors, who rate the candidates according to what they have heard.

In 2011, about 500 people got as far as the Gallup assessment. They were vying for one of only 28 principal slots open



One study found a steeper student improvement trajectory in English and math in New York City schools led by academy-trained principals than in similar schools led by other new principals.

that year. The top candidates were matched with schools based on detailed candidate specifications from school representatives. “It’s all very defensible,” Shilling says of the new hiring practices. “We can say to people, ‘This is why you were selected; this is why you weren’t.’ We haven’t had any grievances from the union.”

The procedure has other benefits, too, including making district officials aware of shortcomings in its leadership pool. Last year, candidates as a whole were weak on data analysis, according to Shilling. The district now provides professional development on data to all assistant principals and aspiring principals. In addition, high-ranking performers who don’t make the final cut receive training to burnish their skills.

A similar hiring overhaul in Charlotte-Mecklenburg has made an impression on the school representatives and zone superintendents who play a role in choosing the final candidate to fill principal slots there, says Morgan, the director of leadership strategy. “I recall the feedback from the zone superintendent was that the school selection committee was blown away by the quality of talent they saw,” she says. “They felt like it was competitive talent, which is what you want.”

ON-THE-JOB PERFORMANCE EVALUATION AND SUPPORT: Districts regularly assess the performance of newly hired principals and provide them with the professional development and mentoring they need to blossom and overcome weaknesses pinpointed in evaluations.

Evaluation and support ideally go hand in hand: A novice leader’s performance is assessed; he or she then receives the needed guidance to mature and overcome the weaknesses uncovered. Hillsborough has worked hard in recent years to make evaluations as meaningful as possible. Before the 2010-11 school year, principals were rated solely by their supervisors. Today, the supervisor’s view is one of eight sources of information intended to paint a full portrait of a principal’s performance. Schoolwide learning gains account for 40% of the picture; teacher ratings of the principal, 15% (as measured by VAL-ED, an assessment tool developed by researchers at Vanderbilt University with funding from The Wallace Foundation); school operations, 10%; four smaller factors (student attendance, student behavior, teacher retention, and principal evaluation of teachers), 20%; and the supervisor’s rating (measured by VAL-ED), the remaining 15%. This year, a committee is working to refine the evaluation, using information gleaned from focus groups with principals. Matters under discussion include finding improved measures in teacher retention and teacher evaluation.

The big point, Hillsborough County’s McManus says, is to make sure that the evaluation doesn’t become an end in itself. “If it’s done right, evaluation can provide information for what professional growth is needed,” she says. “Based on the results of an evaluation, we can say a principal needs more training

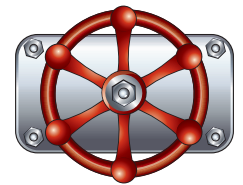
in distributive leadership or instructional leadership or how to use data.” Hillsborough’s new approach to evaluation comes at a time when the district has also introduced a new mentoring program for novice principals. A big topic among newcomers is time management, McManus says.

In 2006, Gwinnett County established a program that pairs retired principals with novices. Since then, the program has grown from three to 11 mentors, and today Gwinnett requires its new principals and assistant principals to take part in the program for at least two years. The novices, who meet one-on-one with their mentors and are required to have at least four hours of work with them monthly, also participate in group sessions that spotlight common stumbles noticed by mentors and program administrators over the years. One example is a widely held assumption that a school’s climate can be changed by fiat from the new person at the top. “We needed to give them very practical guidance: ‘This is how you go about changing climate. You have to get people on board; they have to have the opportunity for input,’” says Glenn Pethel, executive director of leadership development for Gwinnett schools.

Making the right match between mentor and protege, based on factors including the demographics of the novice’s school and the characteristics of its teachers, is one key to successful mentoring, according to Pethel and his colleague Linda Daniels, director of leadership development. Training for mentors in such things as the art of listening and questioning is crucial, in part so that mentors can avoid the common pitfall of being buddies to their protégées rather than coaches. “The novice leaders began to tell us anecdotally that these former principals are really, really helping us to better understand our new job responsibilities, not so much because they are telling us everything they know, but because they are causing us to think, reflect, and ask the right questions,” Pethel says.

Pethel notes that mentoring is just one part of Gwinnett County’s principal pipeline and that the other parts, too, need to be constructed and carefully fit together.

“Without alignment,” he says, “components may be perceived as important but nothing more than isolated acts of improvement.” He and his counterparts in the other pipeline districts are aware that none of this work is easy. Whether boosting mentoring or revamping standards, building a solid pipeline requires energy, money, and cooperation from many hands. But the districts doing the work are banking on a good return for their efforts. “The idea here is we want better-trained principals, and we’re investing a tremendous amount of time and resources on them,” says New York City’s Conelli. “We want them to be successful on the job.”



Evaluation and support ideally go hand in hand: A novice leader’s performance is assessed; he or she then receives the needed guidance to mature and overcome the weaknesses uncovered.

REFERENCES

- Corcoran, S., Schwartz, A.E., & Weinstein, M. (2009).** *The New York City Aspiring Principals Program: A school-level evaluation.* New York: New York University, Institute for Education and Social Policy. Available at www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/principal-training/Pages/New-York-City-Aspiring-Principals-Program.aspx.
- Corcoran, S., Schwartz, A.E., & Weinstein, M. (2011).** *An evaluation of the NYC Aspiring Principals Program, update through 2008-09.* New York: New York University, Institute for Education and Social Policy. Available at www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/principal-training/Pages/New-York-City-Aspiring-Principals-Program.aspx.
- Council of Chief State School Officers. (2008).** *Educational leadership policy standards: ISLLC 2008.* Washington, DC: Author. Available at www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/principal-evaluation/Pages/Educational-Leadership-Policy-Standards-ISLLC-2008.aspx.
- Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., Orr, M.T., & Cohen, C. (2007).** *Preparing school leaders for a changing world: Lessons from exemplary leadership*

development programs. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute. Available at www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/key-research/Pages/Preparing-School-Leaders.aspx.

Leithwood, K., Louis, K.S., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning.* New York: The Wallace Foundation. Available at www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/key-research/Pages/How-Leadership-Influences-Student-Learning.aspx.

Louis, K.S., Leithwood, K., Wahlstrom, K., & Anderson, S. (2010). *Investigating the links to improved student learning: Final report of research findings.* New York: The Wallace Foundation. Available at www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/key-research/Pages/Investigating-the-Links-to-Improved-Student-Learning.aspx.

•
Pamela Mendels (pmendels@wallacefoundation.org) is senior editor at The Wallace Foundation in New York. Her foundation colleagues — Lucas Held, Edward Pauly, Jessica Schwartz, and Jody Spiro — and Angie Cannon of The Hatcher Group contributed to this piece. ■

Rebel with a cause

Continued from p. 44

work Whole-Faculty Study Groups (Murphy & Lick, 2005). Are there schools that started Whole-Faculty Study Groups that are no longer using the design? Yes, for two primary reasons: Leadership changed at the school or district level, and productive group work is hard work. Measuring impact on students means record keeping; looking at student work means looking at teacher work. Without support for principals and problem-specific support for study groups, disillusionment is likely. In such situations, it is too hard to continue. For any form of learning community in schools, strategies for supporting, monitoring, and assessing the impact on students must be clear before beginning. Based on available resources, learning systems are not hard to design. However, such systems are very difficult to maintain without visible support from district and school leaders.

In 2005, I put my luggage in storage and became an observer. I see the term “professional learning community” in every professional publication I receive. Catalogs and advertisements are full of references. Today, believing in the merits of learning communities is like believing in the American way. If asked, any principal is likely to say, “Yes, of course, we have communities of learners in our school.” Pressed for more descriptive information, we would hear responses that reflect a

range in likelihood that students are going to benefit from what the teachers are doing.

What will be the next revolution in our profession? Will it be Learning Forward’s standards? Will it be a new plan by the federal government to “save education”? Who will be the rebels — will it be teachers tired of wasting time and energy in unproductive professional learning communities? Let’s hope whatever it is and whoever are the initiators, our country’s children will be the benefactors.

REFERENCES

- Joyce, B. & Showers, B. (1983).** *Power in staff development through research on training.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Joyce, B. & Showers, B. (2001).** *Student achievement through staff development* (3rd ed.). New York: Longman.
- Murphy, C.U. (1992, November).** Study groups foster schoolwide learning. *Educational Leadership*, 50(3), 71-74.
- Murphy, C.U. & Lick, D.W. (2005).** *Whole-faculty study groups: Creating professional learning communities that target student learning* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- **Carlene U. Murphy (carlenemurphy@comcast.net) is executive director of the Whole-Faculty Study Groups National Center in Augusta, Ga. ■**



A shift in perspective can change our attitudes and our outcomes

I'm writing this in the early morning while savoring the effects of a shift in attitude before I finished my coffee. My friend Maggie had forwarded me an email: Happy IVGLDSW Day! Today is International Very Good Looking Damn Smart Woman's Day. I don't appreciate most "send-this-to-five-people-you-know" emails, but this one offered perspective and attitude. Example: When life hands you lemons, ask for tequila and salt and call me! This article is about perspective and the results it produces. I began today by looking into the mirror and thinking, "What happened to you?" Now that I've shifted to "Good morning, you very good-looking, damn smart woman!" I'm smiling and I have a new perspective about the day ahead.

— Susan Scott

By Deli Moussavi-Bock

About a decade ago, I came across the following passage from Haim Ginott, child psychologist and psychotherapist and a parent educator.

"I've come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized" (Ginott, 1972).

This quotation speaks strongly to me because I see its application to every individual. As a parent, as a human

being, as a team member, a boss, I create the weather around me, and I either humanize or dehumanize those with whom I come in contact, one interaction at a time. It is a frightening conclusion, as Ginott said, and an indication of the inordinate power we each have to drive our lives and the relationships we foster or destroy.

Years of education research indicate that what teachers believe about students and learning influences their instructional choices. This applies to anyone. Beliefs lead to self-fulfilling prophecies. If I find myself believing my students, my colleagues, or my boss are annoying, how do these beliefs impact how I behave with them? Does my behavior then influence the results I have with them? You bet.

Our beliefs inform our practice. It's human nature to look outside for cause and effect, but our greatest power

for shifting our results lies within. I've repeated this mantra to myself over the years: My greatest work is inner work. I feel 80% of the work in my outcomes is dealing with my own beliefs and behavior, by far the greatest challenge.

Gaining perspective on a situation or a person can change everything about my conversations with that person and our collective outcomes.

The most common outcome of conversation is misunderstanding and misinterpretation. It is human nature to misread a situation or a person completely, and it's stubborn to insist that we didn't.

CONTEXT DRIVES RESULTS

Each of us has a filter through which we interpret everything that's



Moussavi-Bock

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. © Copyright, Fierce Inc., 2012.

said or done. This filter — our context — is made up of our beliefs, attitudes, and opinions, many of them unconscious. Through our context, we constantly interpret what people do and say. Where we often get it wrong is we assume our interpretations are true without checking them out. And then we pay a steep price by locking into our own beliefs or the ongoing conversations we have with ourselves.

My context drives my behavior, my results, and my life. It's up to me to examine my beliefs, understand which ones are in my way, and make some choices.

A school leader once told me he had one of the greatest lessons in his life as a middle school teacher. He believed his students were difficult, lazy troublemakers. The more he reinforced this attitude, the more they acted out. The more they acted out, the crabbier he got. The crabbier he got, the worse their behavior became. He realized he fueled the cycle, and his students were in

large part reacting to his behavior.

I've often found myself struggling to let go of a context that is off base, especially after I have felt betrayed, hurt, let down, or have lost trust. Yet I find that lack of trust itself creates more lack of trust. In my work with Fierce in the Schools, one of the biggest challenges team members bring up is allowing someone to overcome past behavior. It often goes like this: The team has someone who has had problematic behavior in the past. The team has labeled this person to the extent that when he or she genuinely strives to change, the team won't allow it. We narrow our context about a

person and make that person incapable of change in our minds until one day all we can see is what he or she does wrong. Who becomes the problem now? We do.

It's up to us to examine our beliefs, make them conscious, and understand how they affect the relationships and results we want.

DAILY MAINTENANCE

I examine my context on a regular basis by asking:

- What are my current beliefs? What is my overall outlook?
- What is the quality of the conversations I am having with myself? With others?
- What are the stories I'm telling myself about my colleagues, my students, or myself? What are the implications of these ongoing stories?
- How does my context affect the way I lead or interact with others? Is my context shutting me down from understanding them or their perspective?
- Do some of my beliefs need to be examined?

MAKE A CHOICE

In my work with teams, the most common pushback I get regarding choosing a new context is often, "but I genuinely do work with a difficult person — they're nasty, difficult, vengeful . . ." I don't doubt it's true. While I can't control other people's reactions or the events that happen, I do have the power to choose my own context.

The question isn't, "Can I justify my context or beliefs?" The question is, "Are my beliefs working for me? Is my current context helping me to get the results I want?"

I can choose a new context. Am I willing to go into the conversation open, willing to listen, learn, suspend my own preconceptions, and hear the other person's perspective? While I

don't need to agree with that person, I do need to understand what he or she is saying. It takes a conscious choice and a willingness to live in the present and let go of the past in order to see myself and others clearly and not through the cobwebs of old thoughts, feelings, and beliefs.

The fastest way to shift our context is by engaging in new behavior. New behavior helps us get out of our rut and establish new patterns. We see things from a fresh perspective.

New behavior means practicing new approaches, allowing people the grace and freedom to grow and change. Err on the side of the generous, and assume positive intent.

Over a decade ago, I found myself working on a team I didn't like. A friend suggested I shift my perspective: Look at it like a light switch. Flip the switch, go into work tomorrow with the assumption that everyone on that team loves and respects me. I tried it. The shift in my perspective shifted the team's behavior toward me. It was a humbling experience.

By choosing a new context and remaining open, I open the door to genuine curiosity, understanding, and progress. A closed mind shuts off our ability to receive insights and move forward.

The topic of context is universal, human, and one of the common threads running through all the school work I have done. It is also the topic I most need to remind myself about. The bulk of our work in determining whether we humanize or dehumanize each other rests in our beliefs about one another and, most importantly, about ourselves.

REFERENCE

Ginott, H. G. (1972). *Teacher and child: A book for parents and teachers.* New York: Macmillan.

•
Deli Moussavi-Bock (deli@fierceinc.com) is director of training for Fierce in the Schools. ■

It takes a conscious choice and a willingness to live in the present and let go of the past in order to see myself and others clearly and not through the cobwebs of old thoughts, feelings, and beliefs.



Nelson



Guerra

Tap into educators' sense of purpose to create equitable classrooms and schools

Most professional development in diversity focuses on two aspects: recognizing issues of inequity and building cultural knowledge. While these are important and necessary steps in developing cultural proficiency, they are not enough. In order to address systemic inequities and create culturally responsive classrooms and schools, educators must take action to transform policy and practice.

Sometimes the action is simple, such as providing parents with documents in their native language rather than assuming they understand communication in English. Another relatively easy strategy is to broaden students' perspectives by helping them learn about cultures other than their own. Educators tend to be willing to take actions such as these because they are familiar practices and most people will agree they are necessary and reasonable in today's diverse schools.

However, when the required action goes against accepted school norms, educators are less likely to act. Educators know that acting

against accepted practices disrupts the school climate and makes people uncomfortable. Colleagues and supervisors may question the motives of educators who raise equity issues or suggest changes. The educator may be viewed as a troublemaker. Because of this, educators are often reluctant to act, even when they believe it is the right thing to do. Taking action that is necessary but unpopular requires a level of courage and moral conviction that may not come naturally. Professional developers can help educators develop the courage to go beyond recognizing issues of inequity to taking action to address them.

SENSE OF PURPOSE

Moving educators to action begins with tapping into educators' sense of purpose and commitment to educating all students well. While we would be the first to say schools have a lot of work to do to become equitable, we would also say that the inequities we find in schools have little to do with educators' lack of concern about students being educated well. In

fact, we believe most educators have a deep desire to ensure all students have a chance to succeed. Professional developers can tap into educators' sense of purpose about their work to help them understand they have the responsibility and the capacity to help create equitable classrooms and schools.

Responsibility comes from professional ethics that call for educators to uphold the right of every student to have equal educational opportunity (NEA, 2012). What this ethical obligation means is that once an educator becomes aware that a student or a group of students

may not have the same education opportunity as other students, the educator has a professional responsibility to do something to protect those students' rights. Educators may assume this responsibility belongs only to principals and other administrators, but that is not the case. Every educator has this responsibility. Professional developers can make this responsibility clear by giving educators scenarios that depict common equity dilemmas educators face. Working through scenarios and discussing possible outcomes help educators understand why action is important and what the consequences of inaction may be. Doing so allows



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. Guerra (pg16@txstate.edu) is an assistant professor and Nelson (swnelson@txstate.edu) is an associate professor in the Department of Education and Community Leadership at Texas State University-San Marcos. Guerra and Nelson are co-founders of Transforming Schools for a Multicultural Society (TRANSFORMS). Columns are available at www.learningforward.org/news/authors/guerranelson.cfm.

educators to consider their own position and what they might do in a similar case.

INDIVIDUAL EFFORTS

The next step in helping educators develop the courage to act is understanding that taking action does not require having authority or even having a group of like-minded colleagues. An individual teacher has the capacity to take action that will make a difference. Teachers can create change by working within their own classrooms to develop culturally responsive practices that serve as models for other teachers. They can ask questions about practices that seem inequitable. They can engage other teachers in conversation about culturally responsive teaching and learning. They can organize a book study to help teachers understand what it means to create culturally responsive classrooms and schools. They can host parent meetings to better inform parents about educational programs and opportunities. They can volunteer for committees and serve as a set of eyes with an equity lens. There are many ways individual teachers can make a difference. They do not have to start with a schoolwide effort. In fact, we would discourage that. The place to start is with what is most familiar and over which the educator has the most control.

NETWORKS

As educators take small action steps, their senses of purpose and needs for change tend to grow. They begin to talk with others about what they are seeing and strategies they have tried. Through these conversations, educators develop networks of people who are also interested in creating culturally responsive classrooms and schools. These networks may be internal or external to the school. In either case, the network becomes a tool that encourages the educator to expand

change efforts. One of the strongest inhibitors to action is the fear of being the only one. Networks help educators overcome this fear by assuring them that they are not alone. There are others who are also taking action.

Networks also act as a mechanism for bringing more people into the change effort. As people within the network discuss their efforts, other educators become aware of the need for change. In turn, the network helps these educators understand the responsibility that comes with knowing and provides a forum for helping educators take action. Networks also make it more difficult for educators to choose not to act. It is more difficult to sit on the sidelines when others around you are taking action and there are witnesses to your inaction.

POLITICAL SAVVY

The final step in helping educators develop the courage to act is to make educators politically aware. Once educators develop the courage to act, they often want to act with a sense of urgency and initiate large-scale change. However, this approach is likely to backfire because it does not take into account what is at stake when inequitable policies and practices are changed. Changing policy and practice to be more culturally responsive means changing the way things have always been done. In most schools, the way things have always been benefits some students and families at the expense of others. However, those who benefit from inequitable policies and practices often do not see it this way. They may view longstanding policies and practices as fair and impartial. They may not understand why a change is needed at all and may resist change efforts. Situations such as this can become highly political and volatile. Professional developers must help educators understand how to be politically savvy and to be strategic in taking action. Being strategic means

starting small, building strong networks and seeking incremental change rather than quick, sweeping change.

AN INDIVIDUAL DECISION

Working through this process increases the likelihood an educator will act when faced with an equity dilemma. In the end, the decision to act is an individual one. At some point, every educator will be confronted with a situation in which he or she must choose whether to speak up in support of a student, parent, or co-worker. The educator may not be surrounded by like-minded individuals and may have to act alone. Here's an example: A student who acts out in other classrooms but does well in one teacher's classroom is being recommended for suspension due to behavior problems. Does that teacher speak out in defense of this student, who is good when he is actively engaged? Or does she remain silent for fear of offending her peers by suggesting that perhaps the problem is lack of engaging instruction? Without the courage to act, the teacher might quietly sit by and allow inequity to continue, convincing herself that his behavior in her class is an anomaly. But a teacher who has developed the courage to act knows she has an ethical obligation to act, and she knows there are consequences for not acting. She also knows that taking action is within her control. She has the efficacy to make a difference. Knowing you have both the responsibility and the ability to act is at the heart of having courage.

REFERENCE

National Education Association. (2012). Code of ethics of the education profession. *National Education Association Handbook*. Washington, DC: Author. Available at www.nea.org/home/19322.htm. ■

LEARNING SCHOOL ALLIANCE

www.learningforward.org/alliance/index.cfm

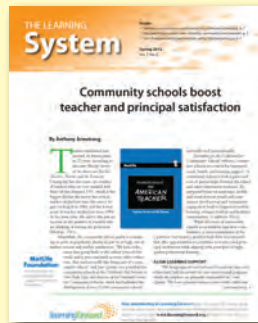


View profiles of participants in the Learning School Alliance, a collection of individual schools committed to collaborative professional learning with educators in their school and others around the country and in Canada. The Learning School Alliance helps create environments where professional learning is embedded in the job, and both teachers and school leaders hold collective responsibility for student success. Participating teams receive tools and materials, coaching and facilitation, a dedicated website and learning platform, and face-to-face learning sessions at national conferences.

PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER SATISFACTION

www.learningforward.org/news/issueDetails.cfm?issueID=353

Learn how community schools boost teacher and principal satisfaction in the Spring 2012 issue of *The Learning System*, sponsored by MetLife Foundation. Teacher satisfaction has reached its lowest point in 22 years, according to the *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Teachers, Parents and the Economy*. Meanwhile, the community school model continues to grow in popularity, thanks to its high rate of student success and teacher satisfaction. A close examination reveals three key elements that contribute to teacher and principal satisfaction while aligning with principles of high-quality professional learning.



TEAM TOOLS

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



With each issue of *The Leading Teacher*, Learning Forward offers free sample tools that support the issue's themes. The May 2012 issue focuses on teacher job satisfaction, which research shows goes hand-in-hand with motivation. Team members can respond to this by integrating theories, research, and models of human learning into professional learning designs. Used as part of a comprehensive learning plan that includes clear goals, collaborative learning, and ongoing support, these tools can enhance professional learning for whole faculties or teams.



LOOKING BACK — AND FORWARD

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning_forwards_pd_watch/2012/05/would_you_do_it_all_again.html

Frederick Brown, Learning Forward's director of strategy and development, reflects on his 25 years in education.

“Whenever you are feeling

either empowered or overwhelmed by all that has changed in this field and wonder if you've made



Brown

the right professional choices, I suggest you reflect on why you got into education in the first place and find a way to reconnect with those original passions.

Take the time to identify the links between your specific work and the benefits for students; if the dots can't be easily connected, then it may be time to determine if you've lost touch with your original reasons for getting into education.”

A TAPESTRY OF INQUIRY AND ACTION:

Cycle of learning weaves its way through Washington district.

By Harriette Thurber Rasmussen and Kathryn Karschney

The West Valley School District in eastern Washington wanted a way to cultivate a culture of rigorous and relevant instructional practice, driven by data, to raise achievement for its students. Using a learning cycle that incorporates data, action, and evidence of results, the district is working to meet its commitment that all graduates will be college-ready.

I AM A PROFESSIONAL:

Learning communities elevate teachers' knowledge, skills, and identity.

By Edward F. Tobia and Shirley M. Hord

As teaching has evolved, professional status remains elusive. Learning communities are a way for teaching to restore its status as a profession. At one middle school, teachers convene in data teams to examine the impact of their teaching on student learning. These educators can be described as professional educators, continuously improving their knowledge and skills while committing their energy, resources, and wisdom to students.

MIDWESTERN MAGIC:

Iowa's statewide initiative engages teachers, encourages leadership, and energizes student learning.

By Dana L. Carmichael and Rita Penney Martens

AIW Iowa is an initiative using a framework that engages teachers and administrators in professional learning communities that are improving student achievement, increasing student engagement, and building a schoolwide culture focused on improving instruction. Data indicate significantly more students score higher in reading, math, science, and social studies in schools implementing the initiative.

WHERE PRINCIPALS DARE TO DREAM:

Critical Friends Group narrows the gap between vision and reality.

By Kevin Fahey

Thirteen principals, graduates of a district-college educational leadership program, formed a professional learning community based on a Critical Friends Group model that uses structured conversation and skilled facilitation to learn about specific aspects of leadership practice directly connected to the real issues facing them. Together for seven years, the group allows them to keep alive a vision of teaching, learning, and leadership that transcends their daily work.

TEAM CHECK-UP:

Use 4 goals to assess a professional learning community's effectiveness.

By Daniel R. Moirao, Susan C. Morris, Victor Klein, and Joyce W. Jackson

Four professional development coaches explore how four school districts determine whether their professional learning communities are working. The answer lies in four broad goals: a culture that supports learning; a common language for talking about teaching and learning; examining and refining instructional practice; and paying attention to the impact this work has on student achievement.

GIVE TEAMS A RUNNING START:

Take steps to build shared vision, trust, and collaboration skills.

By Jane A.G. Kise

Professional learning community members' initial energy for collaboration can dissipate when they run into barriers such as lack of shared vision, trust, and collaboration skills. These barriers are real, yet school leaders often launch initiatives before working to remove impediments. Targeting these key barriers can remove hurdles and energize the work of professional learning communities.

features

REBEL WITH A CAUSE:

A pioneer in the field reflects on the evolution of professional learning communities.

By Carlene U. Murphy

In 1978, the author was asked to become director of staff development for her district. With few resources to draw on, she set out to discover what she needed to know and do. By 1986, frustrated with the status quo and facing the mounting pressure of accountability, she changed direction, focusing on Whole-Faculty Study Groups and connecting professional learning to student achievement.

PRINCIPALS IN THE PIPELINE:

Districts construct a framework to develop school leadership.

By Pamela Mendels

Six school districts are taking part in a six-year, \$75 million initiative to ensure that a large corps of school leaders is properly trained, hired, and developed on the job. The key idea behind the initiative, funded by The Wallace Foundation, is that developing effective principals requires four essential elements: principal standards, high-quality training, selective hiring, and a combination of solid on-the-job support and performance evaluation, especially for new hires.

This article is sponsored by The Wallace Foundation.



INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

American Federation of Teachers	19
Just ASK Publications & Professional Development.....	outside back cover
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.....	21
National Education Association	15
School Improvement Network.....	1
Solution Tree.....	inside front cover
Union Institute and University.....	13

columns

Collaborative culture:

A shift in perspective can change our attitudes and our outcomes.

By Susan Scott

It's up to us to examine our beliefs, make them conscious, and understand how they affect the relationships and results we want.

Cultural proficiency:

Tap into educators' sense of purpose to create equitable classrooms and schools.

By Sarah W. Nelson and Patricia L. Guerra

Professional developers can help educators develop the courage to go beyond recognizing issues of inequity to taking action to address them.

From the director:

A professional learning community's power lies in its intentions.

By Stephanie Hirsh

The most successful professional learning communities pay attention to all three words in the concept.

Writing for JSD

- Themes for the 2013 publication year will be posted at www.learningforward.org/news/jsd/themes.cfm.
- Please send manuscripts and questions to Christy Colclasure (christy.colclasure@learningforward.org).
- Notes to assist authors in preparing a manuscript are at www.learningforward.org/news/jsd/guidelines.cfm.



McWhirter Elementary team members are, from left, Hope Farrell, Nelda Ditta, Melissa Heidman, Nakia Washington, Karen Trinh, Vicky Landers, Leticia Morales, and Sandra Burciaga.

2nd-grade team in Texas wins Shirley Hord Award

The 2nd-grade team at McWhirter Elementary Professional Development Laboratory School, Clear Creek Independent School District, Webster, Texas, is the winner of the Shirley Hord Learning Team Award. Presented by Learning Forward and Corwin Press, this award is given to a team of teachers that demonstrates Learning Forward's definition of professional development in action.

Two schools, Quil Ceda and Tulalip Elementary School, Marysville, Wash., and Haslet Elementary School, Haslet, Texas, were named runners-up.

"These teachers recognize that they can accomplish more together than individually and so they meet throughout the week to plan, reflect, read, and problem solve issues related to instructional practice," said McWhirter Elementary principal Michael Marquez.

Thanks to the team's efforts to increase reading levels and maximize small-group and one-to-one instruction in math, 72% of students schoolwide are reading at or above grade level, compared to 43% in the fall. Using collabora-

To learn more about the Shirley Hord Learning Team Award, visit the website at www.learningforward.org/getinvolved/hordaward.cfm.

tion in professional learning teams, data analysis, student learning goals, analyzing student work, and the support of a literacy and math coach, the number of students meeting grade-level standards improved 79% in 2nd-grade math.

"This award honors the research Shirley Hord has conducted on the attributes and effects of successful professional learning communities," said Jacqueline Kennedy, associate director of strategic initiatives at Learning Forward. "The 2nd-grade team at McWhirter Elementary Professional Development Laboratory School is a strong example of a learning team in action."

Learning Forward's annual awards program recognizes individuals for their commitment to improving student achievement through effective professional learning. Learning Forward and Corwin will present the Shirley Hord Learning Team Award at the Learning Forward 2012 Summer Conference July 24 in Denver.

Corwin sponsored the award, which includes funds to support three representatives of the winning 2nd-grade team from McWhirter Elementary to participate in Learning Forward's 2012 Summer Conference. The winning school will also receive \$2,500 to support collaborative professional learning and a gift of Corwin books for the school's professional library.

Watch learning teams in action

McWhirter Elementary's 2nd-grade team was one of 14 teams from schools across the U.S. that submitted nominations, which included a video and documentation as evidence of the team's professional learning work. The videos are available on Learning Forward's YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD1280A1ED58D58BE.



Learning community practices from other professions offer lessons for educators

The concept of learning communities is at the core of effective professional learning. Learning communities provide the structure for ongoing collaboration, set the stage for deep inquiry and problem solving, and promote collective responsibility and goal alignment among educators. Learning Forward promotes the Learning Communities standard as one of the essential conditions for increasing educator effectiveness and results for all students. As I reflected on the importance of learning communities in supporting continuous improvement and system change, I thought about how these same principles and beliefs are embedded in the work of other professions and in other sectors.

Lee Shulman — best known for research and insights on pedagogical content knowledge — has written about “signature pedagogies” and how they have developed across different professions (Shulman, 2005). Students in medicine, law, engineering, and business experience learning in distinct and recognizable models: engaging in clinical rounds in medical school, experimenting and iterating in engineering design studios, responding to Socratic questioning in law school, and delving into a variety of case studies in business school. But beyond

Kenneth Salim is president of Learning Forward’s board of trustees.

on board KENNETH SALIM

this professional preparation, these professionals engage in practices and learning that reflect core elements of learning communities.

The medical rounds process includes attending physicians, residents, interns, and medical students. Laura Snyderman, a physician at Tufts Medical Center, describes a daily work rounds process that models communication and exam skills for medical students and enables all participants to engage in clinical reasoning, problem solve together, and discuss how and why certain decisions were made based on available patient data (personal communication, 2012).

In the design world, teams work together to brainstorm and generate new ideas for products, but also use a process to make sure that new ideas are aligned with the project’s overall goals. Producer Julie Kim describes a collaborative planning process where goals and principles are prioritized at the beginning of a project and used as benchmarks throughout the often-ambiguous design process. By creating ample time to discuss and propose new ideas, team members are less likely to succumb to groupthink and are held accountable to the project’s overall goals and principles (personal communication, 2012).

What is the significance of having shared principles and practices for professional learning across sectors? The strategies employed in other sectors might have lessons for educators and vice versa.

For example, knowledge management strategies used in the private sector could inform how information about student learning could be shared among teachers, specialists, and administrators. These shared beliefs about teams and learning present an opportunity to garner support for effective professional learning from the broader public. If we expect educators to improve their practice, we must provide the same time, resources, and opportunities for deep learning that we have come to expect in other professions. Only then can we expect to improve performance and produce results for all students.

REFERENCE

Shulman, L.S. (2005, Summer). Signature pedagogies in the professions. *Daedalus*, 134(3), 52-59. ■



Learning Forward Foundation announces winners

The Learning Forward Foundation has announced its 2012 grant winners. These awards provide recipients opportunities to develop their expertise in leading professional learning within their schools and districts and to engage them in the broader Learning Forward community for ongoing professional collaboration and support.

Learning Forward Foundation is dedicated to impacting the future of leadership in schools that act on the belief that continuous learning by educators is essential to improving the achievement of all students. Funds raised by the foundation provide grant opportunities and scholarships for individuals, schools or teams, principals, and superintendents to further Learning Forward's purpose.



LEARN MORE AND DONATE

Learning Forward Foundation's work in advancing the organization's purpose is made possible through donations and the commitment of the teams, organizations, and individuals supported by grants and scholarships.

- Learn more about the grants and scholarships at www.learningforward.org/getinvolved/scholarships_grants.cfm.
- To make a donation online, visit www.learningforward.org/commerce/ifn.cfm.

LEARNING FORWARD AFFILIATE GRANT

The Learning Forward Affiliate Grant is awarded to **Learning Forward New York**, under the leadership of, from left, **Richard Jones, Christine Lowden, and Robert Harris**. This grant provides funding to allow an affiliate to create or expand its outreach, enhancing the focus on professional learning that improves student achievement.



LEARNING FORWARD TEAM GRANT



Hancock



Wilson

The Learning Forward Team Grant is awarded to the team at Kenosha Unified School District in Kenosha,

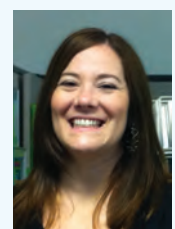
Wis., under the leadership of **Michele Hancock** and **Sonia James Wilson**. The grant supports teams (grade-level, school, and district) to advance Learning Forward's purpose.

CHIDLEY FUND ACADEMY SCHOLARSHIPS

This year's winners are **Tonio Verzone**, lead facilitator for the Avant-Garde Learning Alliance in Anchorage, Alaska, and **Adrienne Tedesco**,



Verzone



Tedesco

instructional coach for the Gwinnett County (Ga.) Public Schools. The Chidley Scholarship provides funding to support participation in the Learning Forward Academy.



LEADING FOR LEARNING: SYBIL YASTROW SUPERINTENDENT'S GRANT

Leading for Learning: Sybil Yastrow Superintendent's Grant is awarded to **Kenneth Hamilton**, superintendent of Monroe Township District in Monroe Township, N.J. The grant is a three-year district/foundation partnership grant to support a superintendent working to develop a culture of high-performing professional learning communities.

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

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

Director, Center for Results

M. René Islas
rene.islas@learningforward.org

Director of publications

Tracy Crow
tracy.crow@learningforward.org

Associate director of e-learning

Tom Manning
tom.manning@learningforward.org

Associate director of strategic initiatives

Jacqueline Kennedy
jacqueline.kennedy@learningforward.org

Distinguished senior fellow

Hayes Mizell
hmizell@gmail.com

Scholar laureate

Shirley Hord
shirley.hord@learningforward.org

Senior advisor

Joellen Killion
joellen.killion@learningforward.org

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Kenneth Salim (2013) President
Julie Blaine (2013)
Mark Diaz (2012) Past president
Clara Howitt (2014)
Amanda Rivera (2012)
Jeff Ronneberg (2014) President-elect
Granger Ward (2013)
Myra Whitney (2014)

PATSY HOCHMAN ACADEMY SCHOLARSHIP

Susan Jones, professional development coordinator for the Clarksville-Montgomery County (Tenn.) School System, is the first recipient of this scholarship. The scholarship is in honor of Patsy Hochman, who was killed by a drunk driver in 2008. Hochman's husband established the scholarship to continue her legacy. The scholarship provides funding to support participation in the Learning Forward Academy.



THANKS TO PARTICIPANTS

The Learning Forward Foundation board of directors thanks those who participated in the scholarship and grant review process: Denny Berry, Kathy Bocchino, Vicky Butler, Sonia Caus Gleason, Charles Clemmons, Lenore Cohen, Tiffany Coleman, Vicky Duff, Lois Easton, Gaye Hawks, Karen Hayes, Audrey Hobbs-Johnson, Sharon Ladner, Linda Munger, Susan Patterson, Kay Psencik, Sharon Roberts, Ronni Reed, Janice Shelby, Bill Sommers, Dennis Sparks, Jody Wood, Sybil Yastrow, and Susan Zook.

LEARNING FORWARD CALENDAR

- July 22-25:** Learning Forward's 2012 Summer Conference in Denver, Colo.
- September:** Members vote in Board of Trustees election.
- Sept. 19:** Proposal deadline for 2013 Summer Conference in Minneapolis, Minn.
- Oct. 15:** Last day to save \$50 on registration for 2012 Annual Conference in Boston, Mass.
- Dec. 1-5:** Learning Forward's 2012 Annual Conference in Boston, Mass.



A professional learning community's power lies in its intentions

Effective professional learning communities are based on the assumption that collective learning and problem solving are key to improving educator practice and student learning. Effective professional learning communities promote the spread of better practices from teacher to teacher as well as school to school, ensuring that more students experience instruction that leads to improved learning. Effective professional learning communities are more likely than individualized learning options to ensure every student experiences great teaching every day.

However, not all professional learning communities achieve this outcome. There is considerable variation in how professional learning communities operate, and, as a result, in the outcomes they are able to achieve. Research in school improvement, reports of exemplary practice in the field, and expert observations provide insight into the characteristics of the most effective professional learning communities.

The most successful pay attention to all three words in this concept.

Professional. *Who* will participate? Professional learning communities include the staff responsible and accountable for

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

an effective instructional program, ensuring that students achieve high standards of learning. This means that professional learning communities include administrators, teachers, and instructional support staff such as counselors, librarians, and school psychologists.

Learning. *What* will be the work of the professional learning community? Combined ignorance will not lead to better outcomes. The needs of the professionals are paramount. Their learning must cover the content and activities to supply the knowledge and skills they identify as necessary to increase their effectiveness.

Community. *How* are educators organized to achieve the intended outcomes of the learning community? Productive communities operate according to structures and processes that facilitate learning and accelerate achievement.

Educators working in an effective professional learning community join the group with the assumption that the data they examine and the needs they identify will point toward the learning they will undertake to successfully address the challenges they face. Learning Forward's definition of professional development focuses on the cycle of continuous improvement, outlining the steps a community takes to achieve its intended outcomes.

Unfortunately, not all professional

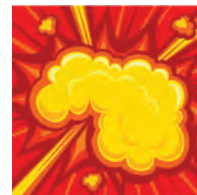
learning communities pay attention to this. As a result, we hear about:

- School systems allocating team time one afternoon a week without embracing a clear purpose or philosophy for achieving results;
- Learning teams using data to justify trial-and-error brainstorming and risk taking rather than decisions that lead to a substantive learning agenda for its members; and
- Learning community members focusing on strategies to strengthen knowledge for students before examining the knowledge and pedagogy needs of educators.

Members of effective professional learning communities recognize that their learning will be the key to their students' learning. Learning is always intentional. It is not simply a byproduct of the many important tasks that groups undertake.

It is no accident that the Standards for Professional Learning begin with the standard on Learning Communities. While many forms of professional learning

may lead to improved knowledge and skills for adults, only the learning community offers a structure, process, and product that lead to systematic continuous improvement for both educators and students. Unfortunately, many embrace the concept of professional learning communities for the appeal of its parts rather than the power of the whole. ■





Boston 2012 Annual Conference



Connect. Engage. Learn.

DECEMBER 1-5, 2012 • BOSTON

Learning Forward's Annual Conference is the best investment you can make to promote professional learning that advances educator and student performance. Experience cutting-edge keynotes and general sessions, participate in interactive learning sessions, and form lasting professional relationships.

Featured speakers include:

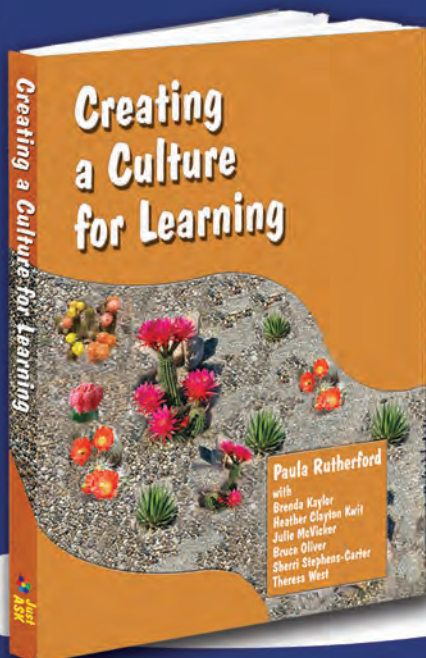


Save \$50 on a three-day or five-day registration when you register by Oct. 15, 2012. To learn more and download an early bird registration form, visit www.learningforward.org/annual.





Contact Just ASK to have one of the authors work in your district to help you use these successful culture-building strategies.



Creating a Culture for Learning

by Paula Rutherford, Brenda Kaylor, Heather Clayton Kwit, Julie McVicker, Bruce Oliver, Sherri Stephens-Carter, and Theresa West

This new book from Just ASK Publications is based on the belief that all schools must create cultures that promote professional growth in order to succeed in their commitment to the achievement of high standards by all students. It includes self-assessments, reviews of the literature, numerous practitioner examples, and tools and templates.



**Just
ASK**

ISBN 978-0-9830756-0-8

302 pages

Order # 11055

800-940-5434

www.justaskpublications.com

Download a sneak peek online