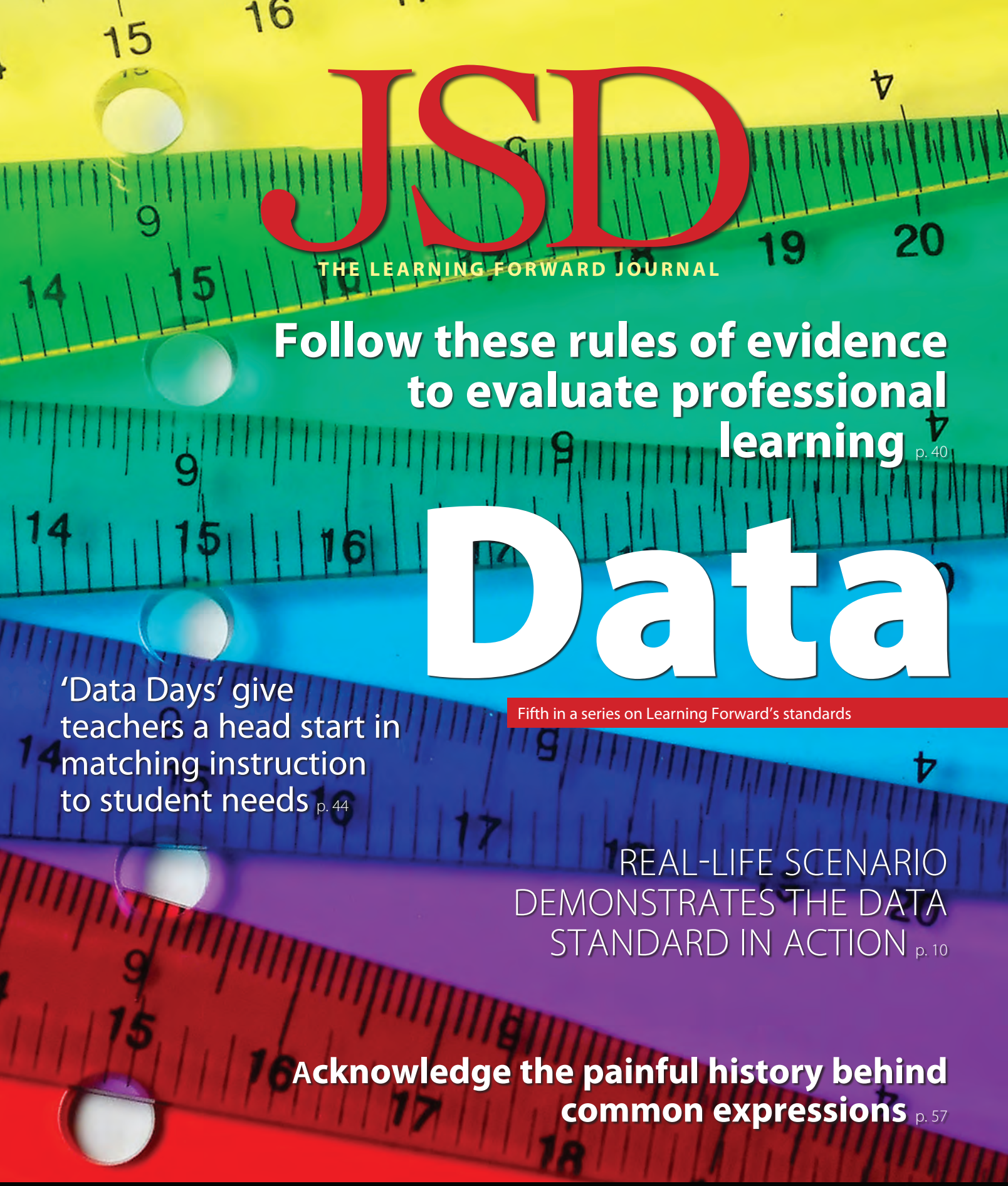

JSD
THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

Follow these rules of evidence to evaluate professional learning p. 40

Data

Fifth in a series on Learning Forward's standards

'Data Days' give teachers a head start in matching instruction to student needs p. 44

REAL-LIFE SCENARIO DEMONSTRATES THE DATA STANDARD IN ACTION p. 10

Acknowledge the painful history behind common expressions p. 57

August 2012 Vol. 33 No. 4 www.learningforward.org

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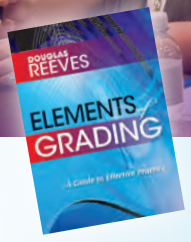

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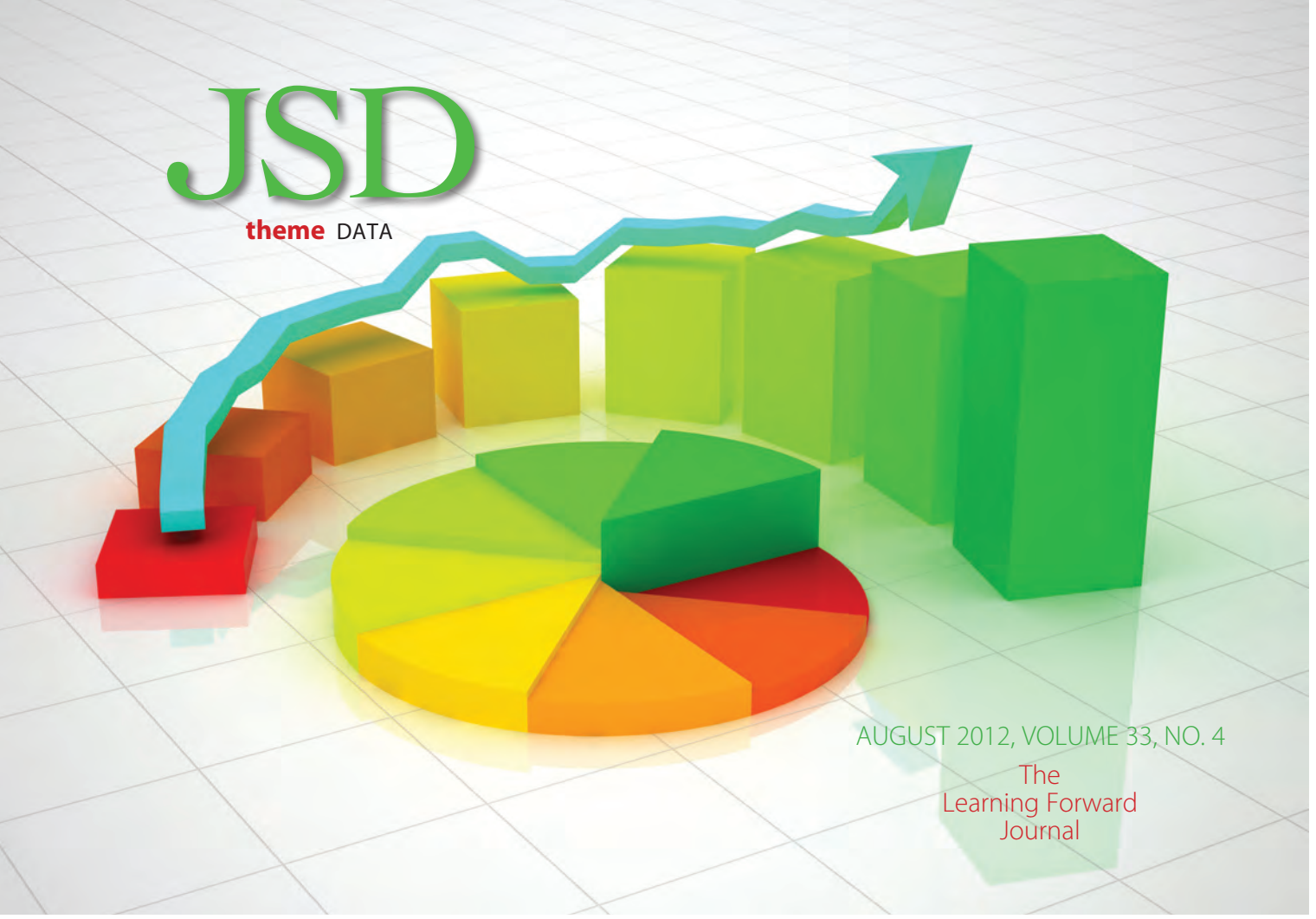

AUGUST 2012, VOLUME 33, NO. 4
The Learning Forward Journal

feature

departments

Don't be fooled by the red herring — look for more evidence to solve the mystery

You've settled in for a *Law & Order* rerun, and by 22 minutes after the hour, a murder suspect is in custody. The victim's family, the police, and the prosecutor are all secure in the knowledge that the criminal is behind bars, mystery solved. A simple glance at the clock tells the viewer that's not the whole story, and, true to form, additional evidence emerges over the course of the case to reveal the full story of the murder. The medical drama *House* followed a similar model. A patient is admitted to the hospital with a mysterious condition and an interesting backstory. The doctors look at the first set of evidence in front of them and pursue a course of treatment, only to find that they need more data to solve the case. An inquiry-oriented crew, they don't stop until they understand the root causes of the illness.

Fans of mysteries everywhere recognize the concept of the red herring, a misleading clue that leads investigators down the wrong path. While the narrative function of the red herring is typically enjoyable to readers, the red herring is a dangerous distraction in real life. As educators look at student learning challenges to address them through their own learning, they need to examine a full spectrum of evidence. Grabbing on to what seems to be the obvious answer and using that information to make changes in practice may have educators arresting the wrong suspect while the real culprit continues to create havoc.

Many school districts are working to create educator evaluation systems that use multiple types and sources of data to understand the impact of educator performance on student learning. Those who engage in, plan, design, facilitate, and provide resources for professional learning need to take a similar tactic. They must look at multiple sources of data to create meaningful professional learning and then understand its impact on educator practices and student learning.

The many kinds of data involved in implementing the Data standard at a deep level include qualitative and quantitative data, common formative and summative assessments, observations, portfolios, performance metrics, work samples, and many others. And that array of data on its own is just information. Without careful attention to analysis and ongoing use, the data are just unexamined clues that don't add up to a solution.

In this issue of *JSD*, learn with practitioners about how they use data to inform professional learning. Teachers all over the country are finding ways to structure and analyze assessments to understand what their students have learned, and this issue includes rich examples of such inquiry-oriented educators. Thomas Guskey (p. 40) explores what makes evidence meaningful to stakeholders involved in school improvement and urges educators to always start with desired outcomes in planning. Anne Conzemius (p. 20) outlines different uses for data. Many writers stress the role of learning about data use as a key step. Stephanie Hirsh (p. 68) closes the issue with a call to create and embrace common definitions of acceptable evidence of impact along with widely used systems of data analysis.

In other words, these writers tell us, don't overlook any of the clues, pay attention to every witness, and don't be fooled by circumstantial evidence. The real story needs to unfold. ■

•

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

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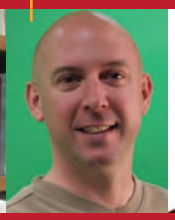

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INSPIRATIONAL INSIGHTS
Five Things I've Learned
Pearson Foundation

This new project from Pearson Foundation is a collection of personal reflections from education leaders committed to learning that improves outcomes for students. Learning Forward Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh joins more than 50 education innovators, including Kati Haycock, president of The Education Trust; Anne Bryant, executive director of the National School Boards Association; and Tom Carroll, president of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. Read their comments on topics such as communication and teamwork, data and accountability, experience and practice, and learning and student achievement.
www.thefivethings.org

STAGES OF TEACHING
Creating a Comprehensive System for Evaluating and Supporting Effective Teaching
By Linda Darling-Hammond, 2012

Darling-Hammond

Criteria and methods for evaluating teachers vary substantially across districts and at key career milestones. A comprehensive system of teacher evaluation should provide support for supervision and professional learning, identify teachers who need additional assistance or a career change, and recognize expert teachers who can contribute to the learning of their peers. This report from the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education outlines an integrated approach and a professional development system that supports effectiveness for teachers at every stage of their careers.
http://edpolicy.stanford.edu/publications/pubs/591

PRINCIPAL PREPARATION
The Making of the Principal: Five Lessons in Leadership Training
The Wallace Foundation, June 2012

Too often, training for principals fails to prepare them for the difficult task of guiding schools to better teaching and learning. This Wallace *Perspective* plumbs foundation research and work in school leadership to identify five lessons for better training, including: more selective admission to training programs, preservice training that focuses on instructional leadership, a call to districts to raise the quality of principal training, how state policies can influence leadership training, and mentoring for new principals.
www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/effective-principal-leadership/Pages/The-Making-of-the-Principal-Five-Lessons-in-Leadership-Training.aspx

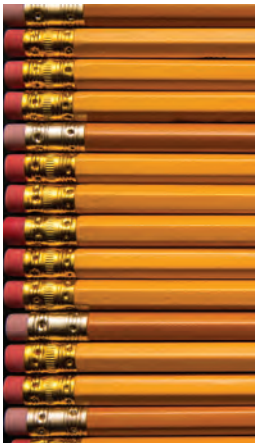
OBSERVATION PROTOCOLS
Implementing Observation Protocols: Lessons for K-12 Education From the Field of Early Childhood
Robert C. Pianta, May 2012

This paper from the Center for American Progress examines lessons from early childhood education that may be helpful as states and districts begin implementing more rigorous observation protocols for K-12 teachers. Although these lessons apply to all grades, they may be particularly relevant for K-3, where assessing student performance using standardized achievement tests is most challenging. Lessons focus on the importance of standardization, trained observers, methods for ensuring the validity and reliability of the instruments, and the use of observational measures to produce effective teaching.
www.americanprogress.org/issues/2012/05/observation_protocols.html

ALIGNMENT RESOURCES

Aligning Teacher Evaluation With Professional Learning

National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, May 2012



The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality has published a series of reports to help states and school districts build meaningful professional learning into designing and implementing teacher evaluation systems. One report highlights three elements to support continuous improvements in teaching and learning; a second report discusses coordinated human capital reforms that focus on professional learning; and a third report explains six required components of an aligned teacher evaluation and professional learning system.

www.tqsource.org/alignEvalProfLearning.php

ONLINE COMMUNITIES

Connected Educators

U.S. Department of Education

The Connected Online Communities of Practice project's goal is to increase the quality, accessibility, and connectedness of online communities of practice by launching and leading communities, conducting design experiments, undertaking case studies, and developing ideas about new designs and infrastructure to support educators in making productive connections. The website offers multiple ways to get involved: Join an online community or add an existing community to the network, propose a guest blog, read and comment on ideas presented, brainstorm with other online community managers, or tell stories about challenges or inspirations.

http://connectededucators.org

IMPROVING HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS

Building and Sustaining Talent: Creating Conditions in High-Poverty Schools That Support Effective Teaching and Learning

The Education Trust, June 2012

Improving public education depends on attracting, nurturing, and retaining talented teachers in schools with the greatest academic need. This report describes the urgency of making high-poverty, low-performing schools satisfying, attractive places to work, and highlights five districts that recognize the importance of teaching and learning conditions. While each district's approach is different, some consistent themes emerge: a focus on strong leadership, a commitment to improving instruction by analyzing student data and reflecting on practice, and a collaborative environment that values and rewards individual contribution.

www.edtrust.org/dc/publication/building-and-sustaining-talent-creating-conditions-in-high-poverty-schools-that-suppo

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HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

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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
QUESTIONS AND LINKS At right are several questions that explore how the Data standard integrates with the other six standards.	• What data are learning communities using in their cycle of continuous improvement? • How do learning community members assess collective responsibility among their members? • How do learning communities evaluate their effectiveness and efficiency?	• What types of student, educator, and school data are leaders monitoring weekly, monthly, or annually to assess progress toward school or district goals? • How do leaders assess school and district support structures and systems to be certain they are contributing to professional learning rather than impeding it?	• How do school leadership teams, district leaders, state education leaders, and public officials monitor the return on their investments in professional learning? • What data are used to prioritize needs for resource investments and to assess results of these investments?

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

SPOTLIGHT:
DATA QUALITY CAMPAIGN

Data Quality Campaign is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, national advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C. Launched in 2005 by 10 founding partners, Data Quality Campaign now leads a partnership of nearly 100 organizations, including Learning Forward, committed to realizing the vision of an education system in which all stakeholders — from parents to policymakers — are empowered with high-quality data to make decisions that ensure every student graduates high school prepared for success in college and the workplace. To achieve this vision, the organization supports state policymakers and other key leaders to promote the development and effective use of statewide longitudinal data systems.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
www.dataqualitycampaign.org

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

Data	Learning Designs	Implementation	Outcomes
• To what degree do data used for formative and summative assessment of the effectiveness of professional learning provide rich, informative data to improve decision making? • How often are formative assessments of the effectiveness of professional learning conducted and adjustments made in the content and design of professional learning?	• What data do professional learning facilitators and participants use to determine the best learning designs to accomplish the intended outcomes? • What data are available, yet not often used, to inform decisions about appropriate learning designs for specific groups of adult learners? • What data are collected and analyzed to assess learners' preferences to promote active engagement and differentiate learning?	• What types of qualitative and quantitative data are used to assess and evaluate implementation? • Who monitors implementation data on a regular basis to identify and address implementation challenges? • When giving feedback on implementation, what types of data are used to identify strengths and areas of focus?	• When outcomes are identified, what process is used to identify indicators of success, benchmarks of progress, and appropriate data for assessing the achievement of those outcomes? • Who is involved in developing the evaluation plan to monitor and assess the achievement of outcomes?

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

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK COMPONENTS

The table below summarizes key evaluation framework components educators will need to consider as they plan small- or large-scale evaluations of professional learning. Learn more in *Assessing Impact: Evaluating Professional Development* (Killion, 2008), a detailed guidebook to planning and conducting evaluations and taking next steps as a result.

Program goals	Measurable objectives	Information/ data needed	Data source	Data collection	Data analysis	Timeline	Location
What does the program intend to accomplish?	What changes are anticipated for students? To what degree? What changes are anticipated for educators? To what degree?	What is the best way to determine whether the change has occurred? What information will tell us that?	What/who is the best source of information about the intended change? What is already available? What might have to be created to gather the information needed?	How will the data be collected?	How will the data be examined to determine whether change did occur? Will descriptive or inferential statistics be needed?	When will data be collected?	Where will data be collected?

Source: Killion, J. (2008). *Assessing impact: Evaluating staff development* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press & NSDC.

By Stephanie Hirsh and Shirley Hord

A PLAYBOOK *for* DATA

Real-life scenario demonstrates Learning Forward's Data standard in action

This article is an excerpt from *A Playbook for Professional Learning: Putting the Standards Into Action* (Learning Forward, 2012). Written by Learning Forward Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh and Scholar Laureate Shirley Hord, *A Playbook for Professional Learning* provides those who work in professional learning with readily accessible information and examples on how to use the Standards for Professional Learning in daily practice. Each chapter of the book addresses an individual standard with a real-life story from the field, a summary of the standard's "big ideas," expert analysis by the authors, and guided reflection questions for readers.

This excerpt focuses on the Data standard and its three components: Analyze student, educator, and system data; assess progress; and evaluate professional learning. In this real-life scenario, educators in a small, rural school district have a major breakthrough when, during their learning session with a state department of education consultant, they identify key elements in the curriculum that students haven't mastered. Staff members also recognize that these are areas requiring their own adult learning so that they are able to instruct students more effectively. Using data to assess student progress and to design strategies for improving teaching becomes a school district norm.

The story:

A DISTRICT LEARNS TO INTERPRET DATA

Karl Kline was a school improvement field consultant for a regional educational service center. He had spent 10 years in this capacity after two decades as a successful principal and administrator in mid- to larger-sized districts in his state. He was respected for his ability to help schools make significant gains in student achievement. His background as a statistics major and math teacher led him to a practical approach that had served many schools well in their efforts to pinpoint areas for improvement.

Each year after the state released the results of its annual standardized tests, the service center experienced a flurry of new calls. This year was no exception as more districts found their scores falling within a state warning band, the result of a state board of education decision to raise the cutoff scores. The field consultants would be busy for quite some time.

Kline was pleased to get the call to work with Merryville Schools, a district he had not yet visited but whose small size he thought would be an opportunity for a systemwide turnaround. As Kline drove the winding back roads to his first appointment with the district's administrators, he anticipated a rigorous meeting to prepare to get the two-school district back on course. After a 45-minute drive, he pulled into the high school parking lot; the superintendent's office was located in the high school. Superintendent Rose Joslyn had seen him arrive and greeted him at the door, leading him to a small room, where she introduced the district's elementary school principal and secondary school principal. Joslyn, the principals, and the Title I coordinator/federal programs director were the district's administrators.

Joslyn outlined the reason she had invited Kline: They were to write a plan to address falling student achievement scores. The administrators took turns giving brief descriptions of their work and insights on the district. Kline thanked them for the invitation to work with them and told them he was ready to dig into the project. The group agreed that the best place to begin an improvement initiative would be at the elementary school. Kline asked that the group begin by looking at districtwide data from the statewide competency tests and data for the classroom levels for the elementary and secondary schools.

The administrators glanced at each other. The superintendent paused and then admitted that the administrators had not taken time to examine the data. The superintendent provided Kline with a set of data, and the group agreed he would return in two weeks to work with the elementary staff.

DATA: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.

BEGINNING THE WORK

For the next two weeks, Kline studied Merryville's data. He looked at subscores by item and reviewed how various student groups had performed. He noticed gender differences in a couple of areas and a significant achievement gap for students receiving free and reduced-price lunch. He looked at the data by classroom and noticed where students had missed a concept that seemed to affect later grade-level strands as well. He was satisfied that he had a good overview of student learning in the district and closed his binder.

Two weeks after the initial meeting with Merryville's administrators, Kline arrived in the elementary school media center to meet with the kindergarten to 6th-grade teachers. He spread the pages of the state reports on a large table. As teachers sat quietly, he introduced himself and explained his mission, then invited the teachers to review the data and to respond to the data's messages. He wanted the teachers' perspectives, rather than to share his views of what he had seen.

Karl Kline put the refreshments out on a table and spread out the data again on an adjacent table. The cookies and lemonade were a success. The data were not.

They dutifully filed over to the table and gathered around the sheets, staring at the columns of figures. Their faces looked bored or blank, and Kline thought they were tired after a long workday. He asked them what they perceived from the data. After a lengthy time with no responses, he gently and with genuine concern adjourned the meeting, scheduling a subsequent meeting two weeks later when, he said, he hoped the staff wouldn't be so tired.

Kline reflected on his approach and decision to solicit teachers' reactions and input about the data. He was committed to not just telling them what he saw, but involving them in the process of identifying areas of need so they would understand and make decisions for their own learning. He decided that some social activity might be in order to begin their next meeting and might allow the teachers a few minutes to rejuvenate before they tackled the mental challenges of examining the data.

When he returned to the elementary school two weeks later, Kline brought cookies and lemonade. He put the refreshments out on a table and spread out the data again on an adjacent table. The cookies and lemonade were a success. The data were not.

When Kline asked the teachers for insights, the silence again was unbroken. He asked for anyone to volunteer one fact from the data, but was met with silence. Kline adjourned the meeting without having made any progress.

LEARNING TO READ DATA

As he drove home, Kline thought about the two meetings with the teachers. Why couldn't he get a response from them? He knew the teachers cared deeply about their students and wanted them to improve. Suddenly, he had an epiphany: Maybe the teachers did not know how to read and interpret the display of figures from the state. How could they respond if they didn't understand the reports? Kline was so used to looking at state reports that he didn't think twice about it, as were most of his colleagues at the educational service center. And, with his math background, numbers were almost second nature to him.

He pulled off the road and pulled out his phone, dialing the number for the elementary principal. The principal confirmed his hunch — the school staff had had no professional development about their school's state achievement test scores. The principal admitted that the staff hadn't spent time trying to figure out what the information actually meant.

Kline's next call was to a well-respected state department of education staff member who agreed to travel to Merryville to work with district staff on how to interpret the data. Kline's third call was to Joslyn to report his experiences with the teachers, his conversation with the principal, and his request to the state department of education facilitator. Joslyn expressed her

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appreciation and asked that the district's entire staff be included in the professional learning.

On the day of the professional development, the state department of education facilitator arrived early with a binder of information for each staff member, organized by grade level. The binders included the information as teachers received it from the state, blank sheets formatted for teachers to extrapolate data sets, and protocols the group would use to dig into the data.

All the teachers arrived on time, along with the two principals and the superintendent. The Title I coordinator also was present. Staff worked in small groups as they followed the facilitator's points on the slides she had brought. The educators were engaged. The study kept their attention as they began to understand the state department's format for reporting school and classroom data, and they soon moved to item analysis in academic subject areas.

The science teacher got it. He understood now that he needed new skills to help his students learn successfully. He would need to design learning materials and activities that matched students' needs in order to reach the goal.

The groups had worked through midafternoon on the item analysis, when suddenly the secondary school science teacher jumped to his feet. "They didn't get it!" he exclaimed. He realized from the student data that his teaching had not resulted in desired learning outcomes for students. A moment later and a trifle abashed, he reported, "I'm going to have to learn to teach that differently next year."

The science teacher got it. He understood now that he needed new skills to help his students learn successfully. He would need to design learning materials and activities that matched students' needs in order to reach the goal.

Kline's next meeting with teachers went more smoothly as they began to process the information and determine their next steps.

Joslyn was pleased with the meeting's progress and called a meeting with the administrative team to write the district plan. Kline, on the other hand, was concerned that the staff had additional needs regarding their use of data. He hoped the district plan would address using data.

Big ideas:

USE DATA TO DESIGN LEARNING AND TRACK PROGRESS

Gathering dependable data and interpreting the data accurately are required to determine whether students are reaching learning goals. Having data without the knowledge and skills to use the data is a waste.

Professional development to help educators effectively review and apply what they learn from data is imperative so that teachers are able to design appropriate student learning activities. Regular formative assessments help educators track student progress toward learning goals.

Some stakeholders assume that professional development automatically affects educators' knowledge and skills — and their practices. They assume that adopting new practices immediately affects student learning outcomes. Too often, evaluation is lacking to determine whether the professional development has been powerful enough, continuous enough, or personalized enough to change administrators' or teachers' behavior in ways that support student learning. Gathering and interpreting data helps document the effect of professional learning on changes in administrator and teacher practice.

Analysis & advice:

DIG DEEPER INTO DATA WITH MULTIPLE APPROACHES

To continue the momentum established in the systemwide professional development, Superintendent Joslyn might next meet with the two principals and the Title I coordinator in a location free from distractions. She could ask the principals to bring their staff rosters and to identify teachers they believe could help lead school and district improvement plans. They could review the state student test data as well as student data from other sources. In addition, Joslyn can bring a rich data set to the discussion and guide the administrative team in considering educator data relevant to the student data and additional system data.

Joslyn might remind the administrators that staff members have just begun to learn about analyzing data and about the data's relationship to instruction. She must continually reinforce the principals' and school staff members' interest in analyzing and using data to identify student learning needs. The school principals might consider whether they have space for a data room where staff could post and leave the array of emerging data, including students' scores, for teachers to track student results. The leadership team can evaluate whether the idea is practical and whether space is available.

Joslyn also might lead the administrative team in using data to identify areas of high student performance and discuss how to celebrate the results with students and teachers. She also could guide them to identify areas of low performance and challenge them to determine the most pressing needs for improvement. Then she could persuade them to study the data with teachers, to solicit input, and to get staff observations and input for decision making. The superintendent prepares principals for their role in engaging all building staff, a critical first step in the district's plan for change and improvement. She also then is adhering to the first big idea of the Data standard: analyzing student, educator, and system data for improvement.

Joslyn might investigate the concept of learning communi-

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Guided reflection:
WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The superintendent of this small district was compelled to seek external help when the district was unable to reverse declining test scores. Instead of settling for quick fixes, all district staff learned the power of analyzing data to use to guide continuous improvement. As staff developed skills in interpreting data, they uncovered additional learning needs. Questions remain about whether the district will commit to continuing to learn how to use data beyond analyzing student tests.

- What other sources of data will support staff decision making regarding professional learning?
- What sources of data do you use to inform your professional learning?
- What ideas might the staff include in the district improvement plan?
- How do you suggest the external consultant introduce the other two purposes for data?
- What actions might the principals and teacher leaders take to ensure that staff use data in accordance with Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning?
- What additional knowledge and skills do you need to develop related to the Data standard?

ties, which would allow the small faculties of each school to form groups to study student achievement and to use the data to identify areas that need attention before seeking solutions to low achievement. Joslyn could ask the Title I coordinator to find more information about learning communities and to bring those findings to the next meeting.

Joslyn's next step might be to coordinate both schools' concerns and interests. In a follow-up meeting, she will learn what progress the principals have made with their staffs in reviewing data and identifying the most pressing issues that staff must address. Joslyn will have closely reviewed the data herself to identify areas that will most likely need attention. She will need to be prepared for competing challenges and to be able to lead the administrative team to harmony on the schools' and district's approach.

As all these activities progress, Rose Joslyn and her supervisors should collect data so they can evaluate the professional learning they are bringing to the district.

Joslyn and her team might consider what professional learning will be necessary for changes in the content and pedagogy that will be the basis for the schools' improvement efforts. This district does not have a history of giving attention to implementing desired changes. Nor has it assessed changes in teachers' classroom practices or student gains from new ways of teaching. Measuring progress is another big idea that constitutes the Data standard.

Joslyn might search for a consultant to support the district's effort to increase staff members' proficiency in their subject areas and in using data. She also might access Learning Forward's Innovation Configuration map so that she and the principals can learn about the principals' roles as related to the Data standard for professional learning.

Joslyn might consider having the district leadership team attend Learning Forward's Annual Conference in order to learn more about principals' roles in using data. Another option might be to engage in some e-learning on the topic. She could hire a leadership coach to help the administrators understand how to implement the skills they and their teachers will learn. In addition to finding money in the budget for consultants, Joslyn also is responsible for ensuring that all necessary resources are available.

As all these activities progress, Joslyn and her supervisors should collect data so they can evaluate the professional learning they are bringing to the district. This aspect of the Data standard allows for revising professional learning so that it is of high quality and enables staff to become informed about and skilled in new practices.

The district's comprehensive plan for school improvement, a state requirement that district leaders have viewed more as a compliance document than a help, should clearly include the steps that the superintendent and the district's educators will take. The energy, attention, and commitment that educators will give to the plan will be clear from the meetings and conversations that Joslyn and others will have for their professional learning. After all, change requires learning, learning is change, and using data will guide the way.

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TAKING ACTION:
Professional learning challenges

By Stephanie Hirsh and Shirley Hord

This tool, adapted from *A Playbook for Professional Learning: Putting the Standards Into Action* by Stephanie Hirsh and Shirley Hord (Learning Forward, 2012), is one of many activities that offer readers opportunities to engage with each other to expand their understanding and capacity to use the Standards for Professional Learning in everyday work.

The activities in the book progress along levels of engagement from reviewing the standard to digging deeper to taking action. These activities may be led, supported, or guided by a facilitator who may be a lead teacher, instructional coach, principal, or someone from the district office. Two or three learners may undertake these activities informally, or school and team leaders can use the activities in a more formalized setting, helping team members gain new understanding and insights into using the standards.

OUTCOME	Participants will identify data sources essential to responding to questions about professional learning.
OVERVIEW	Educators hear many questions about professional learning and its impact. Data are key to answering many of these questions. Participants explore ways to use data to respond to questions from various stakeholders.
MATERIALS	• A copy of the article "A playbook for data: Real-life scenario demonstrates Learning Forward's standard in action," by Stephanie Hirsh and Shirley Hord (*JSD*, August 2012, Vol. 33, No. 4, pp. 10-12, 14, 16) for each participant. • A copy of the tool Professional Learning Challenges for each participant.
OPTIONAL MATERIALS	• Data standard rationale, available at www.learningforward.org/standards/data. • Video vignette, available at www.learningforward.org/standards/data. • "Meaningful analysis can rescue schools from drowning in data," by Douglas B. Reeves and Tony Flach. *JSD*, August 2011, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 34-40.
TIME	50 minutes.
LEARNING STRUCTURE	Groups of three to four to promote active engagement.

Directions		Time
1	Review the big ideas of the Data standard.	5 minutes
2	Discuss how the Data standard is relevant to professional learning in your setting.	5 minutes
3	Working individually or in small groups organized around the challenges presented, review the tool Professional Learning Challenges. Develop responses to each challenge.	10 minutes
4	Invite participants to share their responses with others and complete the tool with others' input.	5 minutes per challenge
5	Discuss the overall value of this exercise and discussion.	5 minutes

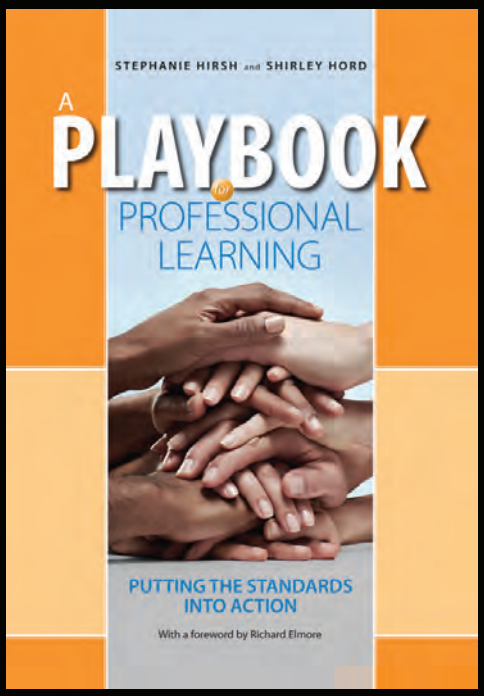
Professional learning challenges

CHALLENGE	RESPONSES	DATA SOURCES
A PARENT APPROACHES THE PRINCIPAL AND SAYS: I don't understand why we have all these early release days. How do these days benefit students?		
A SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER VISITS A SCHOOL AND SAYS: I hear teachers complain about professional development. How do we respond to these concerns?		
A NEW TEACHER SAYS TO HER MENTOR: It seems like new teachers have a lot of required professional development. How will all these programs help me?		
A REPORTER CALLS THE PRINCIPAL AND SAYS: Your school is giving teachers a lot of time out of class for professional learning communities. How will you judge the groups' success?		
A BUSINESS PARTNER ASKS: Why should I give you funding for professional development rather than for new technology for classrooms?		

Source: Hirsh, S. & Hord, S. (2012). **A playbook for professional learning: Putting the standards into action.** Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

A Playbook for Professional Learning: Putting the Standards Into Action

By Stephanie Hirsh & Shirley Hord
with a foreword by Richard Elmore



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THE X FACTOR IS 'WHY'

A clearly defined purpose boosts the impact of data analysis

By Anne Conzemius

"We've been doing this for years, and nothing's ever happened. This is the first time we're actually going to do something with the data."

This exclamation came from a teacher who has been participating in summer data retreats for more than 10 years. She has found them enjoyable, but never really knew the purpose of the retreats or what would happen as a result. When using data for professional learning, looking at the numbers is not enough. The numbers are a reflection of past and current practice. They have to be understood at a deeper level, contextualized within a given purpose or goal, and ultimately translated into actions that bring about improved results.

This teacher's experience is not uncommon. In its work with schools, a team of consultants and coaches from QLD Learning, a school improvement company, has discovered a long and varied list of approaches educators use to look at, analyze, decipher, encode, unencode, correlate, graph, chart, and scrutinize their equally unending and varied stream of data resources. If we step back to examine what's going on, it's fairly easy to see that the emphasis on using data has been just that — using data. But to what end? This is the question that has been missing in so many cases.

As Steven Covey (1989) advised, begin with the end in mind. Leadership's role is to begin any data conversation by stating why we are engaging in the analysis and what we expect to extract from the analysis that will help us learn and improve. To do so, leaders must first be clear about the purpose that is driving their pursuit into the data.

If we are clear about why we are looking at the data in the first place, we can be very streamlined about the

MATCHING TOOLS TO PURPOSE

PURPOSE	TOOLS	GRAPHS	BENEFITS
Compare results	Descriptive and generalized statistics (e.g. percentages, averages, cohort numbers).	Bar charts and pie charts.	Know how we measure up against a standard or a similar group or subgroup at a single point in time.
Predict results	Analytical statistics (e.g. common and special cause variation, moving ranges).	Run charts and control charts.	With enough common data over time, this kind of analysis reveals patterns, trends, and probable outcomes.
Write a SMART goal	Gap analyses (e.g. accountability, proficiency, and change over time).	Combination of bar charts and run charts.	Determine the greatest area of need to give focus to goal setting and improvement activities.
Monitor progress	Zone analyses and conversion charts (e.g. percent correct, number meeting or exceeding standards, and numbers achieving defined performance criteria).	Multicolored target templates.	Detect movement toward a SMART goal, plan differentiated instruction, monitor response to intervention, and compare movement across all levels of performance.

approaches we take to pursue answers. Thus, the second important role of leadership is to provide appropriate resources, tools, and processes that teachers need to make good use of collaborative learning time. When data are well-organized, relevant, and targeted toward specific analyses or purposes, teachers' professional learning from the data will be efficient and profound.

FIVE USES FOR DATA

There are five generally accepted reasons to use data as a part of an educator's ongoing professional practice. Of course, there are many other more specific reasons one might look at data, but these five cover the overarching need in an educational setting. The five major purposes for using data are:

1. To enhance understanding and gain perspective;
2. To create focus and monitor progress;
3. To guide decisions or solve problems;
4. To measure impact and implementation of a new initiative or strategy; and
5. To generate new learning and innovation.

Note that using data for accountability and evaluation of individuals or groups is not on this list. Accountability and evaluation are inherent in each of these five uses individually and to an even greater extent when all five are considered collectively. That is why it is not advisable to use any single data source or process to evaluate or hold an individual or a group accountable for the results.

For each purpose, there is a distinct analytical process that can be applied to various data sources. Knowing the purpose helps zoom in on the type of data we want to examine, the most appropriate analysis in which to engage, and the metrics that we will use to achieve our purpose. Additionally, the purpose determines which graphical tools are most useful for interpreting and reporting the results. See "Matching tools to purpose" above.

1 USE DATA TO ENHANCE UNDERSTANDING AND GAIN PERSPECTIVE.

All understanding of data is relational. What that

means is that we cannot gain understanding or perspective by simply looking at the numbers. The numbers tell a story in relation to something else, such as a standard, an expectation, a goal, a larger group or population, a subgroup, or a similar group. For example, if we were to say seven children earned a score of 100% on this measure, that is all we would know. It is a fact, but it is not a useful fact unless we know the total number of students who took the test or performed the task. Is it seven out of seven (100%) or is it seven out of 700 (1%)? If the latter, how did the other 99% score?

If our purpose is to understand how our students are doing, it is possible to compare a particular performance result against a standard, an expectation, or a goal. That comparison gives us perspective because we are analyzing the data against an acceptable or ideal level of performance. Another type of comparison might be against a larger group, such as a state or national norm, an entire district or school, a grade level, or all courses using that same measure.

In the case of standardized, norm-referenced tests, determining the percent of students meeting or exceeding a standard is useful for gaining perspective on how our own students are doing on a specific standard. Because the data are derived from a very large population of test takers of similar age, percentiles, quartiles, and scale scores can also be useful. These are NOT particularly useful metrics for understanding individual learners' needs or strengths. The use of common summative and formative assessments are much better tools for understanding an individual student's performance or that of a group of students at any particular grade level or in any particular course.

Comparative analyses are only as good as the object of comparison being used. If the annual data retreat focuses its analysis on comparing the school's or district's performance against the state's overall results, all we will know is whether we're better, worse, or about the same as the state average. That does little to compel or inform action, which is why so many teachers return to their classrooms and continue to do what they've always done, happy to know that others in the state are worse off.

2 USE DATA TO CREATE FOCUS AND MONITOR PROGRESS.

When the purpose of looking at data is to prioritize areas of need so that improvement efforts can be targeted and monitored for progress, it is unlikely that the status quo will prevail. Specific actions related to student learning gaps are much more likely to occur because they are evident as a result of how the data were analyzed. Also, the translation of the data into goal setting is immediate and strategic.

SMART goals (specific and strategic, measurable, attainable, results-based, and time-bound) are an expression of both the direction and amount of improvement that is desirable and achievable within a given time period. They identify performance gaps that must be closed to achieve the school's or district's vision. Because they are created collaboratively by teachers who will be responsible for achieving them, they represent the commonly held aspirations for professional learning and student achievement.

The data analysis process that is used to create and monitor SMART goals looks for the greatest area of need for the school, team, or classroom. The process is based on the Pareto principle, which is a method for teasing out the few areas of focus that will have the greatest overall impact on the whole. This highly focused approach gives specificity to the goal as well as to the actions that will be needed to reach the goal (Conzemius & Morganti-Fisher, 2011).

The analysis looks at three types of gaps in student achievement and identifies specific standards, skills, and subgroups that require attention. Data are placed into a template that allows for quick and easy calculations. Two of the calculations determine how far the school or team is from where they are **required** to be (accountability gap) and how far they are from where they want to be (proficiency gap). A third calculation shows how much improvement has been made over time in each subject area. After the greatest area of need has been isolated, teams use a color-coding process called zone analysis to highlight the specific skills, standards, or knowledge gaps that contribute to their current performance levels. These areas are prime candidates for improvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. These are also the areas that will be measured and monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that all students are making continuous progress toward the goal.

Let's go back to our enlightened teacher who has spent 10 years of her summer vacations looking at raw numbers and state averages. What was different this time? The analytical process she and her colleagues engaged in led them to develop a schoolwide SMART goal which, in turn, gave them what they needed to focus their improvement efforts and monitor their progress throughout the upcoming school year. They left with a plan. They knew where they wanted to be and how far they had to go to get there. They knew what to do next in the form of a few highly strategic actions, and they had a means for monitoring their progress along the way.

3 USE DATA TO GUIDE DECISIONS OR SOLVE PROBLEMS.

One way data can be used to promote professional learning is through a standard problem-solving or decision-making process. The data the team uses will depend on the problem or decision being considered, but the process and the analyses are fairly standard. Let's look at the problem-solving process. Problem solving could occur in a number of areas, including student behavior, staff communications, technology issues, scheduling, and facilities use.

THE PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS

1. **Agree upon and operationally define the specific**

problem to be addressed. This first step should result in a clear and agreed-upon statement and definition of a single, specific problem that is familiar to or being experienced by all members of the team.

2. **Understand the problem in its current state.** How often does it occur? Where and when does it occur? Who is most affected and how? How long has it been a problem?
3. **Identify potential causes of the problem.** Use the cause-and-effect diagram (a tool specifically designed to assist teams to identify root causes of a problem) (Conzemius & O'Neill, 1999) to organize categories of potential causes and the underlying factors that are perpetuating the problem.
4. **Isolate and quantify the most pervasive causes.** Gather data that will verify or reveal the intensity, location, and frequency of the causes. A Pareto analysis might also be useful in this context.
5. **Create a SMART goal for problem resolution that eliminates or dramatically reduces the most pervasive causes.** In this case, the SMART goal is based on eradicating the causes of performance gaps as opposed to working on a single greatest area of academic need.
6. **Create a plan for achieving the goal that includes specific actions, roles, responsibilities, and timelines for the team.** Action plans that are linked directly to team goals provide a map for the team's problem-solving journey. When action plans are thorough and specific, each person on the team will have a clear picture of how he or she will contribute to solving or eliminating the problem. Plans can also be monitored for implementation, which gives the team ongoing feedback on its progress.
7. **Monitor the impact of solutions on problem resolution.** Keep an ongoing record of evidence that shows the problem has been resolved and not just redirected to another area or is newly manifest in another way.

SMART goals are an expression of both the direction and amount of improvement that is desirable and achievable within a given time period.

The use of data in this category informs decision making at each step of the process, and the analyses are straightforward.

SMART GOAL TREE

RESULTS GOAL

By _____ (year), _____% of our teachers will have adopted the SMART goals process as their professional improvement practice.

INDICATORS	MEASURES
Results: Improved and improving results in academic achievement.	Student performance measures (national/state) Student performance measures (district) Student performance measures (in the SMART goal)
Strategic focus: Schools engaged in the SMART goals process.	Indicators of progress → Report SMART survey → Yearly report
Leadership capacity: Shared responsibility for student learing using the SMART goals process.	

Source: Conzemius & Morganti-Fisher, 2011.

PROGRESS MONITOR
N = % of students proficient or above in district

		Math	English/ language arts	Writing	Science	Social studies
Baseline	Elementary school					
	Intermediate					
	Junior high					
	High school					
Midyear	Elementary school					
	Intermediate					
	Junior high					
	High school					
End of year	Elementary school					
	Intermediate					
	Junior high					
	High school					

4 USE DATA TO MEASURE IMPACT AND IMPLEMENTATION.

Every time a new initiative is put into place, a plan for measuring its effectiveness should accompany its implementation. There are two characteristics of effectiveness that need to be measured: Is the program or process being implemented with fidelity, and is it having the level of impact that makes it worthy of our investment? Neither question should be an afterthought. If we want to know whether the initiative is working, we need to have baseline information that represents the starting point of each.

It is rare to find a school or district that applies this level of scrutiny to new initiatives at any point in the process, much less as a routine or planned part of a systemic change strategy. The process and data used to conduct these analyses are not complex, nor do they take inordinate amounts of time to put into place. My colleague, Terry Morganti-Fisher, and I use a measurement system to help districts create a measured approach to systemwide improvement. This system incorporates the use of the SMART Goal Tree Diagram (see diagram on p. 24) as the graphic organizer for planning, goal setting, and monitoring three distinct aspects of the impact and implementation of any new initiative. The three aspects are: results (typically in the form of student learning data); strategic focus (evidence gathered against a rubric of implementation expectations); and capacity building (survey results that demonstrate a change in practice, climate and/or culture) (Conzemius & Morganti-Fisher, 2011).

Many of the data tools that we use to focus and monitor improvement at the school, team, and classroom levels are equally useful for measuring impact and implementation at the system level. One major difference at this level is whether the amount of improvement warrants the investment of time, training, and ongoing expense associated with continuation of the program. That is often difficult to ascertain and requires enough time for the initiative or program to become fully implemented. In the best of worlds, a pilot approach to implementation is desirable.

5 USE DATA TO GENERATE NEW LEARNING AND INNOVATION.

In each of the four categories already covered, the approach to using data is either to look backward or to examine data that depicts current performance. The highest level of professional learning for any organization is what Senge (1995) refers to as "generative learning." It is the learning that accompanies innovation, a critical shift of focus required for preparing students for 21st-century skills. Instead of reading trends or patterns in data from the past or comparing student performance to some group against a standard set of competencies, the generative learner is entrepreneurial in his or her approach to change.

Action research is an example of generative learning. It is different than problem solving because it isn't focused on a problem per se. It isn't a process improvement because it may address a process or a strategy that doesn't currently exist. It isn't so much about understanding where we are as it is a strategy for helping us think through and test innovations in teaching and learning. Data are generated along the way.

Another example of generative learning is through the application of new tools for learning, such as virtual technologies, social media, collaboratories focused on community action, projects that extend beyond the school walls, and timelines. We have only begun to understand the power of the data that these new methodologies will provide.

MAKING DATA RELEVANT

The practice of carrying boxes of charts, tables, and graphs into summer retreats or spending hours in front of spreadsheets trying to understand the significance of every possible data point is not sustainable. When leaders bring data to the table, it must be for a specific, defined purpose. Data need to be organized in a manner that allows for relatively quick understanding and must be concise and relevant to the purpose at hand. Graphic organizers, templates, tools, and processes are especially helpful for collaborative teams because they help to maintain focus and direction. They should be simple to use and aligned to the analyses that will be conducted. These general tips will take the pain — and some of the resistance — out of using data as a critical tool for professional learning in our schools.

The data analysis process that is used to create and monitor SMART goals looks for the greatest area of need for the school, team, or classroom.

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TEACHERS HARNESS THE POWER OF ASSESSMENT

COLLABORATIVE USE OF STUDENT DATA GAUGES PERFORMANCE AND GUIDES INSTRUCTION

By Phillip Herman, Peter Wardrip, Ashley Hall, and Amy Chimino

Improving systematic use of student data to inform the work of teachers, schools, and districts has become a hot topic in education reform. Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning stress better use of data, and particularly student performance data, within an integrated approach to improving practice.

While better use of data by schools and districts is critical to improving student outcomes, the most direct impact comes from teachers using evidence of student thinking and understanding to improve instruction. However, systematically collecting, recording, analyzing, and reacting to this kind of data is challenging for teachers.

Two teachers who have harnessed this powerful practice are Ashley Hall and Amy Chimino (two of the authors of this article), both 4th-grade teachers in a not-for-profit charter system near Pittsburgh, Pa. Hall and Chimino have learned to use data formatively to influence what they do

Phillip Herman meets with Ashley Hall, center, and Amy Chimino on a project to use student performance data to improve instruction.

instructionally. Their students have been highly successful on measures of performance, and the teachers attribute student success, in part, to the ways that teachers assess learning and use the results from those assessments instructionally. They work collaboratively to develop routines that help them — and their students — gauge how well each student understands and can demonstrate mastery of learning standards. The routines include assessment, feedback, public use of data, reteaching, individualization of tasks, and progress monitoring.

Many of their practices serve as an example of what other teachers might do, alone or in teams, to use data more effectively to raise performance. These evidence-based practices are highly effective in these teachers' classrooms and may be transferred to other teaching contexts if appropriate professional learning supports are in place.

One specific practice — using information from summative assessments in formative ways — is worth highlighting for practitioners who want to use data more effectively in instruction.

GATHERING THE DATA

Propel McKeesport is a not-for-profit charter system near Pittsburgh, Pa. The school serves traditionally underserved students who are largely low-income (88% free or reduced lunch) and minority (72% African-American). Hall and Chimino shared the same 42 students during the 2010-11 school year.

On the end-of-year statewide exam, 100% of students were proficient or advanced in math and 86% were in English. These results are unusual in the state, particularly given the demographics of the classrooms. Furthermore, these students made considerable progress within the school year. On an August benchmark exam that is intended to predict the score on the end-of-year test, only 35% were proficient or advanced in math and 47% in English.

A primary source of actionable information about students is collected from what the teachers call the Monday assessment. Monday assessments are paper-based, mostly multiple-choice assessments of math and reading that probe student understanding of the required state learning standards. In form, it is meant to mimic the end-of-year standardized exam. Administered each Monday throughout the school year, the assessment includes about 24 to 26 questions in each domain and requires about 1½ to two hours to administer for each subject. Thus, much of each Monday is taken up administering and scoring the assessments. The teachers choose most questions from released items from Pennsylvania state tests or from other states' released items that match the learning standards the teachers want to assess that week. The chosen items represent varying levels of challenge.

To tailor the content of the assessments to the needs of the classroom, the items fall into three categories:

- **Some items test students on new content before the teacher has introduced the learning standards in class.** Teachers use results on these items as a pretest to understand what students know about new content to prepare for upcoming instruction.
- **Other items assess standards that have been covered previously in class.** These items cycle in and out of the Monday assessments over time to check that the students learned and continue to demonstrate mastery of

Propel McKeesport
McKeesport, Pa.

Grades: **K-8**
Enrollment: **387**
Staff: **24 teachers**
Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	**22%**
Black:	**72%**
Hispanic:	**2%**
Asian/Pacific Islander:	**0%**
Native American:	**0%**
Other:	**3%**

Limited English proficient: **0%**
Languages spoken: **English**
Free/reduced lunch: **88%**
Special education: **12%**
Contact: **Randall Bartlett**, Propel Schools director of curriculum, instruction and assessment
Email: **rbartlett@propelschools.org**

the tested standards. Results on these items help determine whether concepts need to be reviewed as a classroom activity or if identified students need to review specific content.

- **Finally, there are items for concepts that students have recently struggled with on earlier Monday assessments.** Results from these items help the teachers understand where students are on a learning progression in mastering those challenging standards.

Although the teachers use multiple-choice items that are mostly from standardized exams, they use the results formatively to impact their practice. To help make multiple-choice items more informative about students' understanding of standards, the teachers require students to provide a written explanation of their answers for each item. This explanation may include why they chose a particular answer and/or the steps they took to solve the problem. These explanations typically are one or two sentences and may also include numerical symbols. A key element of the teachers' practice is to have students explain or justify their reasoning, in writing or orally. The explanations serve two purposes: They support student self-regulation by helping students monitor their own understanding and serve as important sources of data for the teachers. Multiple-choice formats may not provide enough diagnostic information for teachers, so the explanations make the multiple-choice items more diagnostic. For example, when asked what the teachers think when a student gets a multiple-choice item correct but the explanation is wrong, one of the teachers responded, "It means they guessed."

In general, Monday assessments represent a context for the teachers' professional learning.

A recognized challenge for teachers using assessment information productively is the timeliness of the data. Standardized test data often cannot be used formatively because results come back weeks or months after administration. To address this challenge, these teachers score the Monday assessment almost immediately. They score the multiple-choice items, read the explanations, and record results, including whether the explanation was correct, so that students get the results as quickly as possible.

MAKING SENSE OF THE DATA

The teachers record Monday assessment data using three units of analysis:

- First, the performance of each student is recorded as a percentage of test items correctly answered. For example, a student who scored 12 out of 24 earns a score of 50%.
- Second, the performance of the class is recorded with respect to performance category: below basic, basic, proficient, or advanced, which again mimics levels of the end-of-year standardized exam.
- Finally, each student's performance is recorded with respect to certain concepts on the test. This notifies the teachers of standards with which individual students are struggling, as well as standards with which most of the class is still struggling. For example, students might start to show a good understanding of straightforward rounding questions, but a rounding word problem on the assessment may show that the students need more practice with the skill of rounding in varying contexts. The assessment data indicate how broad and how deep the understanding of rounding is when new problem contexts are introduced deliberately on the Monday assessment.

Students learn about their performance on the Monday assessment in two stages. Individual assessments are scored and returned to students the same day, showing them which test items they answered correctly and their overall percentage of correct answers. On Tuesday, a white board in the classroom prominently displays test performance results for the class in several categories. Class performance itemizes the percentage of students who have scored at each performance category. In addition, the students' mean score for the assessment is listed. This mean score is graphed on the white board, showing how the class as a whole has performed for the previous weeks. The posted results often spark discussions about performance and goal setting for the following week. The teachers ask students to verbalize attributions that support the connection between effort and outcome and to make explicit attributions about why they performed as they did.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FROM DATA

Collecting and analyzing data about students' understanding of important learning standards provides these teachers with rich professional learning opportunities as they strive to improve their effectiveness. Monday assessments give systematic markers of student progress and understanding. Students' successes and struggles offer suggestions for which topics need to be reviewed and re-emphasized. As the teachers monitor student progress, the data also allow for reflection on the impact of their instructional plans. As patterns of student accomplishment, as well as misunderstanding, become evident from Monday assessment data, both teachers are able to reflect on and critique the value of their lesson plans, the feedback they provide, the learning supports they design, the rhetoric they use, and the messages they transmit to students and parents.

Monday assessments also support discussions about each teacher's instructional activities because it is a common routine in both of their classes. They commonly discuss students' achievement, progress, and strategies to target improvement. For example, the teachers can identify general patterns of performance in students across reading and math. If a student has poor patterns of performance on both assessments that deviate from the student's typical pattern, they can seek to understand larger issues influencing the student's performance and may

collect data to support these working hypotheses about student performance. In addition, this common instructional routine also enables them to compare each other's strategies for analyzing the data, which sometimes provides new ways to discern the progress of their students.

In general, Monday assessments represent a context for the teachers' professional learning. The teachers are standards-driven in their approach to instruction. They have developed routines, including Monday assessments, that provide the right balance between wanting to know about individual students and whole-class progress. These Monday assessments provide enough detail for these teachers to act on instructionally. At the same time, the Monday assessment practice, though it takes effort to collect, record, and analyze data, is practical in classrooms. Monday assessments represent what these two teachers have learned about using assessment information to impact in substantive ways what they do in class. Based on students' understanding of standards, these teachers react and strive for more effective approaches to support student growth.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

This article focuses primarily on these teachers' practices in relative isolation from their school contexts, but it is important to describe how their context supports their practices. The school supports the teachers' professional learning from data in four important ways:

- **These two teachers share the same students.** Therefore, each student's performance can be compared and discussed. Importantly, individualized plans for improvement are shared across teachers so each student can benefit from that shared effort. The messages students receive about how to improve in math are often congruent with how they can improve in English.
- **The teachers have a common planning time every day.** This allows for time in their day to plan and reflect together on the progress of their students.
- **Once a month, the two teachers meet with the principal and instructional coaches in status meetings.** The purpose of these meetings is to discuss the performance of the class as a whole, as well as to identify specific students to target for improvement. The teachers bring their Monday assessment data to these meetings as evidence for students' needs and achievements.
- **The school as a whole encourages the use of student data as an organizational norm.** One of the powerful practices that characterizes instruction in the school is that the "continuous use of data shapes and guides instruction."

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

There are several lessons to be gleaned from these teachers' practices. These lessons are consistent with the broader research literature of data use in schools but provide more detail and a richer context of success than much of that literature.

1. **Student data that most directly influences instruction comes from instruction.** While teachers find value in a variety of data, such as standardized tests, attendance reports, and reports from teachers, information about students generated from their classroom experiences provide the clearest indicator for what to do next instructionally to make classrooms more reactive to student needs.
2. **Sharing data publicly with students is important.** At the class level, sharing data about progress with students demonstrates expectations. Plus, discussing data with students supports student self-regulation, an important developmental priority for these teachers.
3. **Actionable data is timely.** Though it takes a time commitment to score the assessments each Monday, that information is timely enough for teachers and students to use. The teachers usually use the information from the previous Monday assessment to influence what they teach and stress the following week. The delay, if there is any, is only a few days or a week. This is important for any effort to use data formatively.
4. **Using student data is individual and social.** By using data from a common instructional activity, teachers learn about the analysis, interpretations, and decisions their colleagues make to support student learning.
5. **Student data must speak to the learning goals.** Teachers can be overwhelmed by the amount of data students generate in and out of class. The data they gather from Monday assessments reflect their instructional priorities, progress toward the standards, and support for student self-regulation of learning.

Collecting and analyzing data about students' understanding of important learning standards provides these teachers with rich professional learning opportunities as they strive to improve their effectiveness.

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LINK DATA TO LEARNING GOALS

COMMON DISTRICT ASSESSMENTS CONNECT TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS TO STUDENT PERFORMANCE

By Kay Psencik and Rhonda Baldwin

In 2010, district leaders of Douglas County Public Schools, Douglasville, Ga., launched an ambitious initiative to ensure that teachers set goals that focus on increasing their effectiveness and show student growth. To achieve this goal, the district leadership team focused on common district assessments to establish common learning experiences for all students regardless of the school they attend and to ensure teachers across the district have a level playing field when setting their goals for the year and measuring student growth as a part of CLASS Keys, the Georgia teacher evaluation system.

To improve student academic achievement, the leadership team believed that the district needed more than talented people, a clearly stated set of standards, high expectations, and hope. Tying student performance data and levels of effectiveness on the CLASS Keys standards to a teacher's and/or teaching team's annual goals has created a system that focuses and facilitates teacher learning. CLASS Keys and LEADER Keys (the leader evaluation system) call for a clear connection between teacher behaviors and student growth and performance. The rubric from the CLASS Keys system on pp. 34-35 shows details from the curriculum and planning strand. The rubric outlines the teacher actions and evidence that demonstrate an educator's level of performance in that strand. The district's leadership team developed several assumptions about its work to guide this process:

- When teachers and administrators appraise teacher effectiveness on CLASS Keys indicators and set au-

The experience of one 4th-grade team illustrates how using the CLASS Keys to inform professional learning can impact teacher practice and student results. The three team members met during the summer to review end-of-year data and regularly throughout the year for common planning time. Their work together informed lesson planning, student interventions, and their own growth and goal setting.

thentic, challenging goals for teacher growth, teacher effectiveness improves in ways that positively impact student learning.

- Teacher-developed common district assessments driven by the Georgia Performance Standards for all units are central to teaching teams' efforts to offer results-oriented instruction that meets students' needs.
- When teachers analyze student achievement trends in a variety of data and reflect on their own practice, they are better informed to set relevant professional learning goals for strengthening their performance.

COMMON DISTRICT ASSESSMENTS

One of the district's most ambitious goals was to start the 2011-12 school year with common district assessments for each grade level and all content areas for at least three units of study. The district assembled an assessment leadership team that included teachers, instructional facilitators, coaches, members of the professional learning department, principals and assistant principals, and district cabinet members. This team established clear specifications for all assessment designs and a rubric to judge quality. Four teachers from every grade level and every content area became a team of assessment writers. Each team met with facilitators and wrote assessments over the course of four days in June. The leadership team would guide, facilitate, review, and give feedback about assessments to all teams. After all assessments were developed, all staff reviewed every assessment and gave feedback for recommended changes before the first assessment. Furthermore, the assessment leadership team reviewed every assessment developed using the rubric they had created. With this feedback, the assessment writing teams made corrections to their work.

ONE TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

The experience of one 4th-grade team illustrates how using the CLASS Keys to inform professional learning can impact teacher practice and student results. The three team members met during the summer to review end-of-year data and regularly throughout the year for common planning time. Their work together informed lesson planning, student interventions, and their own growth and goal setting.

The team was enthusiastic about recently developed districtwide common assessments in all content areas for all grade levels. Though only one team member had been on an assessment writing team, all had reviewed and given feedback on the assessments before the start of the school year. The team believed the assessments were clearly aligned with the Georgia Performance Standards and reflected their rigorous expectations for students.

At its first meeting, the team had two agenda items: establishing CLASS Keys goals for the year and preparing the first unit of study. Team members shared what they had learned about themselves as individual teachers and as a team through their self-assessments in CLASS Keys. They set goals using a process and guidebook from the district. They analyzed student performance data and set a team goal. They debated possible causes and remedies in what they observed in the data. They shared ideas for their

own professional learning and began to craft goal statements.

As part of this process, they completed individual self-assessments in CLASS Keys. One team member noted his growth in classroom management, which had been a challenge for him when he first started teaching. Another noted her increased effectiveness in ensuring that each lesson was clearly aligned with student standards. She realized how much she had grown in intentional teaching. Both team members also noted areas that still challenged them.

At the team's next common planning time, members shared their strengths and challenges. They reviewed the previous year's student achievement data on state and district assessments and on student grades. They identified where students had shown growth and the challenges they continued to face.

Team members discussed their self-assessments, recognizing that the strengths they held in common made a predictable contribution to student growth. Then they uncovered the challenges facing them. They discussed the connections: *"Students did not show as much growth in the area of mathematics problem solving. Though we taught problem solving all year, we did not really focus on it. We might have even considered it an add-on."*

Through discussion, they realized that student math results wouldn't improve unless the team changed its approach toward problem solving. During the discussion, their principal and coach walked in and, after review, both principal and coach agreed with the team's analysis.

ESTABLISH GOALS

The team's next step was to establish goals. First, team members set their target SMART goal for student achievement in mathematics problem solving. Then they thought about how to set their own professional learning goal. They agreed to research the best strategies to teach problem solving before their next common planning meeting and then set their goal.

The team was accountable for two goals — one focused on using the common district assessments to demonstrate student learning and growth and a second on their own professional learning.

The team combined the two expectations into one statement: *Students in 4th-grade math will increase their achievement on the state standards from 45% to 53% by the end of the year through implementation of effective mathematics problem-solving strategies.*

Team members re-examined their common district assessments to determine which reports would be essential and how to use data from those assessments to determine student growth in their classes.

They narrowed their selection to data that focused on problem solving. They reviewed the common district assessments to analyze whether data from these assessments would be sufficient to show growth. They also used their own common assessments for learning, classroom observations, students' daily reflections on learning, and one-on-one conferences with students to chart student growth in math problem solving. They brought their data charts and samples of student work to every other common planning session so that they could not only examine the data but also analyze student work.

Because the team's goal would be part of its initial goal-setting meeting with the principal, team members used the district goal-setting guide to establish a rationale, a theory of change, and a logical process that would lead them to adopt new instructional strategies.

Once they had done their research and study, team members discussed what high-quality mathematics instruction that incorporates problem solving looked like. They described what students would do well, what new approaches to learning that they would use well, and how teachers would know that they are changing their practice. They developed model lessons using new strategies, observed each other teaching those strategies,

LESSONS LEARNED ALONG THE WAY

- **Leadership matters.** District-level teacher leaders, teacher leaders at their building, teacher assessment writing teams, and the principal leadership team have all been integral to the district making significant movement toward achieving its goal. When leadership is shared throughout the district and teams of teacher leaders and administrators work collaboratively to achieve common goals, those leaders become a strong, powerful voice in building understanding and shared vision in the district.
- **Listening to all voices,** challenging the status quo, not losing sight of the vision, and encouraging the learners along the way are essential to progress.
- **Growth in student learning** is not always clearly discernable from a single assessment strategy, even if that strategy is clearly aligned to the state standards.
- **Connecting professional learning goals** to student data builds ownership in student outcomes and changes in practice. This practice is aligned with the cycle of continuous improvement as illustrated with the 4th-grade team in this article: analyze data, establish learning goals for students and staff, develop effective instructional strategies, engage in professional learning and coaching, and assess the impact of those adult learning experiences on student performance.

and then made shifts in their lessons as they learned. While they would be using assessment strategies to measure student growth, they would also host regular focus groups with students to learn about their attitudes toward mathematics.

STUDY EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

As the team began to plan the first unit of study, team members discussed different ways to approach mathematics problem-solving instruction. Realizing they needed to study effective strategies, they decided to explore new strategies individually and bring ideas to their next meeting. They also planned to visit the 3rd-grade team, which was more skilled in this area.

During the next week, team members worked individually on the goals they had set for themselves. They observed the 3rd-grade team together and debriefed that experience. They recognized several strategies that would help students and discussed them at their next meeting. They also reviewed the upcoming first common district assessment.

Though the 4th-grade team only met formally once a week, they continuously planned together. Sometimes they reviewed lessons; sometimes they discussed students who were not meeting with success and determined differentiated strategies to help. They were determined to meet their goal, so they monitored student progress regularly.

As they dug into their sources of data — including a data management tool the district had purchased — they discovered several promising reporting options: They could identify groups of students who missed each question; they could see individual student areas of strengths and growth for the entire assessment; or they could group students by standard, ethnicity, and performance based on a number of criteria. Excited about the possibilities, they used these reports at their next formal collaboration session. To know whether students are making progress, the team must continuously chart student growth student by student, skill by skill, assessment by assessment. Though this work is time-consuming, the results show student progress and clarify the connection between their work and student outcomes.

As the time came to give the first common district assessment, the team was pleased with its efforts. Team members had planned units based on the standards that they knew were tested, they had applied new strategies for differentiation, and the new strategies had made a difference for many students. They discussed the data summary reports to prepare for their conversation with the principal about student growth and their own learning.

Team members noted with satisfaction that students were developing greater skill in problem solving. They could see the connection between student growth and the team's efforts to increase teacher effectiveness in this area. While they knew they were on the right track, they also knew they still had much to learn.

THE CHALLENGES

Not all experiences have been as promising as the one shared by this 4th-grade math team. Starting many initiatives at one time has challenged the staff and inspired resistance. The leadership teams have stayed the course and are making adjustments to the system of designing common assessments and setting goals based on what they are learning.

Common district assessments were developed from district curriculum maps that are aligned with the Georgia Performance Standards. However, the coherence of assessments from unit to unit may not have been sufficiently articulated to ensure that the assessments written provide adequate information for teams to determine student growth. Even the fact that some standards are not taught in each unit of study based on the district curriculum maps or throughout multiple units all year long makes analyzing student growth based on the common district assessments difficult.

Douglas County Public Schools
Douglasville, Ga.

Number of schools: **33**
(**20** elementary, **8** middle, **5** high schools)
Enrollment: **24,250**
Staff: **2,400**
Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	**35%**
Black:	**48%**
Hispanic:	**11%**
Asian/Pacific Islander:	**1%**
Native American:	**0%**
Other:	**4%**

Limited English proficient: **5%**
Languages spoken: **English, Spanish, Russian, Japanese**
Free/reduced lunch: **58%**
Special education: **10%**
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NEXT STEPS

Now that a substantial amount of work has been done to write and use the district common assessments, principals and teachers are beginning to focus on using the data from these assessments to set meaningful, challenging adult learning goals.

The common district assessment writing teams met again in June to revise their work, write new assessments for units of study they did not address last year, and develop assessments for units of study with single common district assessments.

The way to ensure the success of all students is to ensure the success of all teachers and principals who are responsible for their learning. Douglas County is committed to coaching and facilitating school teams and school leaders to instill professional learning into the daily life of all so that everyone can be successful.

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SAMPLE CURRICULUM AND PLANNING RUBRIC

This example of a rubric from the Georgia CLASS Keys system for the curriculum and planning strand highlights at the top the overall areas that a teacher addresses for a strand. The details below show the evidence and actions that demonstrate a teacher's performance along a continuum for just one aspect of that strand.

CURRICULUM: A system for managing and facilitating student achievement and learning based on consensus-driven content and performance standards.

CP 1.1: *The teacher plans instruction that demonstrates strong knowledge of content and effective instructional delivery.*

	NOT EVIDENT	EMERGING
CONTINUUM OF IMPROVEMENT	The teacher does not plan instruction that demonstrates adequate knowledge of assigned content area(s) or the teacher is unable to teach content using effective instructional methodology.	The teacher plans instruction based on knowledge of the assigned content area; however, the teacher lacks depth in content knowledge or cannot organize or present content effectively so that students can learn.
EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE	**Teacher evidence** *Lesson plans/curriculum units* • Covers content superficially in lesson plans. • Identifies material to be covered, but rarely thinks about how students will learn the material. • Provides students with no opportunities to use content creatively in a peer group or individually. *Observations* • Asks students primarily for facts rather than in-depth concepts. • Overlooks incorrect or confused student responses by moving on to another student or changing topics. • Controls class discussions and limits student interactions with one another. *Conferences* • Cannot explain how students or groups learn content differently. • Blames students for their lack of content knowledge or interest in the subject area.	**Teacher evidence** *Lesson plans/curriculum units* • Designs plans to help students grasp factual knowledge and use content knowledge. • Creates strategies to engage students in content, but strategies are isolated and/or may lack coherence or depth across lessons. *Observations* • Uses current and accurate content knowledge in teaching. • Explains content in more than one way. • Relies on teacher-student-teacher response pattern that keeps students dependent on teacher for approval/disapproval of their ideas. • Asks simple questions of fact or interpretation, but rarely higher-level questions that enable students to grasp deeper concepts. *Conferences* • Demonstrates enthusiasm and interest in teaching and learning more about field of study. • Believes that all students learn content the same way rather than acknowledging learning differences.
EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE	**Student evidence** • Students frequently produce misinterpretations of content in assessments or discussions. • Students report that the teacher does not understand the content area(s).	**Student evidence** • Students learn accurate information, but also are interested in different ideas people have about content. • Students report benefits from learning in the content area(s).

Plans with deep knowledge of content and delivery.	Demonstrates a clear understanding of the curriculum.	Plans interdisciplinary instruction with real-world connections.
Curriculum and planning		
Uses the curriculum to plan instruction and assessment.	Uses an organizing framework to plan instruction.	Plans assessment to measure mastery of the curriculum.

CURRICULUM: A system for managing and facilitating student achievement and learning based on consensus-driven content and performance standards.

CP 1.1: *The teacher plans instruction that demonstrates strong knowledge of content and effective instructional delivery.*

PROFICIENT	EXEMPLARY
The teacher plans instruction that consistently demonstrates knowledge of major concepts in the assigned content area. The teacher also organizes and presents content effectively so that students learn.	The teacher plans instruction that demonstrates a depth of knowledge of major concepts, assumptions, debates, processes of inquiry, and ways of knowing that is central to the assigned content area and presents content effectively so that students learn.
Teacher evidence *Lesson plans/curriculum units* • Provides a strong content base in all plans, including major concepts and assumptions as well as facts. • Designs opportunities for students to learn content in appropriate ways for the content type. • Designs extended practices that apply acceleration/ remediation according to learning needs. *Observations* • Uses students' prior knowledge and/or misconceptions to guide instruction. • Expects and encourages students to learn and reason about problems in the content area(s). • Arranges opportunities for students to explore content knowledge in complex ways and report discoveries to others. *Conferences* • Articulates in-depth, complex knowledge of content and teaches it appropriately for most learners' needs. • Demonstrates awareness that content knowledge in any field is complex and constantly evolving. • Recognizes there are multiple perspectives on any topic. • Articulates, questions, and reflects on conceptual issues in the field.	**Teacher evidence** *Lesson plans/curriculum units* • Encourages students to debate issues in the content area(s). • Engages students in active learning through exploration and hands-on learning through projects, inquiry processes, and the use of technology. • Anticipates common misconceptions and makes modifications to address student needs. • Plans interventions when students do not understand. *Observations* • Asks questions that demonstrate the teacher thinks like someone in the field and helps students to see the world in that way. • Provides subject-specific scaffolding, coaching, and modeling to support students as they learn new concepts. *Conferences* • Forms a broad understanding of how diverse learners acquire specific content knowledge. • Adapts instruction during the lesson to meet specific student needs.
Student evidence • Students observe (in surveys, etc.) that teachers help them understand rather than judge them for misconceptions. • Students grasp the meaning as well as the facts of the content they are learning. • Students recognize and discuss issues related to the content area.	**Student evidence** • Students demonstrate understanding of content through explanation, interpretation, empathy, perspective, application, and self-knowledge. • Students listen, learn, generate data, and use evidence in ways acknowledged by those in the content area(s).

Source: Georgia Department of Education.

SCHOOL-BASED COACHES PLANT SEE OF LEARNING

A districtwide approach to data analysis promotes job-embedded learning and improved teacher practice

By Rachelle Hill and Lori Rapp

Schools and districts are inundated with data from a variety of sources. As a result, using data to guide instructional planning can be daunting for teachers and schools. While schools and districts are dealing with shrinking budgets and growing demands for high student achievement, an investment in school-based coaching can provide exponential change in a short time.

In 2007, Lewisville (Texas) Independent School District introduced school-based data coaches to assist teachers in using data and, as a result, increase student achievement. Instead of relying on outside sources for change, the district instituted change from within through school-based personnel who facilitated conversations about multiple sources of data. District administrators have found the initial investment in secondary school data coaches has fueled teachers' professional learning and growth.

THE ROLE OF THE DATA COACH

Research shows that coaching, teacher collaboration, and teacher reflection are vital components for creating

change in instructional practice. Schmoker (2004) writes that research supports collaboration as a catalyst for teacher change. Wellman and Lipton (2003) advocate reflective conversations to institute change, but insist on the importance of a conversation facilitator in "intentionally organized opportunities" (p. ix). They write, "The quest for more data-based planning, problem solving, and decision making often stumbles against limited capacities for engaging in thoughtful interactions." By scheduling meetings and guiding collaborative action supported by data, the school-based data coach bridges the gap between ill-equipped teachers and daunting data.

District administrators used the Texas High School Allotment fund to create the school-based data coach position in order to promote change on individual campuses. School-based data coaches support teachers in a cycle of continuous improvement by training teachers to use the district's data management system, facilitating data and curriculum conversations to result in data-driven action steps, and following up with teachers to ensure action steps have been implemented.

Lewisville's data coaches impact teacher professional practice and, ultimately, student learning through conversations about local formative and summative assessments, standardized student achievement data, and walk-through trend data. At most of the secondary schools, data coaches schedule regular content-specific data conversations about district curriculum-based assessments with teacher teams. During these conversations, data coaches facilitate analysis of student performance on the most recent curriculum-

based assessments, examine students' identified misconceptions, and then create an action plan to strengthen student understanding. Later, data coaches follow up with teachers regarding their action plan and its success. This districtwide approach to data analysis promotes job-embedded learning and improved practice for teachers.

The presence of a job-embedded data coach ensures that teachers find the time for data analysis, which results in professional growth that directly impacts daily instructional practice. Such opportunities transform a school into an adult learning environment, where teachers learn what works best in each other's classrooms and problem solve around current and real issues rather than waiting to attend a workshop or inservice.

DATA ANALYSIS IN ACTION

One middle school data coach explored the previous year's science state assessment scores. She created teacher-friendly reports that disaggregated the data according to specific state standards and student group performance. Then the coach facilitated conversations about the data with the school's science teachers. As a result of the conversation, the group formed a plan to address academic vocabulary, department expenditures, and intervention structures for struggling students. At the end of the year, the school's science state assessment scores increased from 70% of students meeting the passing standard to 92%.

Lewisville Independent School District
Lewisville, Texas

Number of schools: **67**
Enrollment: **51,920**
Staff: **6,332**
Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	**51.34%**
Black:	**8.74%**
Hispanic:	**25.96%**
Asian/Pacific Islander:	**10.70%**
Native American:	**0.43%**
Other:	**2.82%**

Limited English proficient: **13.06%**
Languages spoken: **81**
Free/reduced lunch: **27.8%**
Special education: **9.85%**
Contact: **Lori Rapp**, executive director, learning design and support
Email: **rappl@lisd.net**

Another middle school data coach uses the previous year's curriculum-based assessments data to engage in proactive curriculum unit conversations with teachers. The data coach meets with the teachers before each unit begins, and the group examines last year's curriculum-based assessment data specific to that unit's learning goals. Such meetings prompt teacher collaboration on instructional techniques that might improve student learning. As a result, teachers are willing to experiment with new instructional strategies in the classroom. These meetings with the data coach shifted teacher perspectives concerning curriculum-based assessments from district-mandated to local tools for assessing individual student learning.

Another data coach uses discipline, achievement, and attendance data to ensure that incoming 9th graders receive necessary interventions. The data coach, the lead counselor, the assistant principal, and the principal team up to examine all available data on entering freshmen. The team then facilitates conversations with teachers about how to support students who are at risk of dropping out of high school.

In addition to examining state and curriculum-based assessment data, data coaches are also trained to conduct classroom walk-throughs and facilitate trend data conversations. At one high school, the data coach encouraged math teachers to collect their own walk-through data by visiting each other's classrooms. As the teachers gather walk-through data on their department, the data coach organizes periodic, reflective conversations examining instructional practices identified in the walk-throughs. The outcome of these conversations establishes a focus for the next round of walk-throughs. Such an approach empowers teachers to reflect on their own practice in a nonthreatening way.

EVIDENCE OF CHANGE

Rapid growth in diversity across the district, a rising dropout rate, and low student achievement scores factored into the need for change. District data indicates that from 2002 to 2006, certain student groups, such as economically disadvantaged and English language learners, grew exponentially. State standardized test scores showed a large gap in math and science between white students and limited English proficient students, and the district had been labeled "academically acceptable" by the Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System.

However, by the end of the 2008-09 school year, the academic gap had begun to close. According to district records, the gap between white and limited English proficient students in meeting the passing standard in math on state assessments decreased from 26% to 15%. The gap between white and limited English proficient students in meeting the passing standard in science on state assessments decreased from 55% to 35%. In 2009-10, the number of limited English proficient students meeting the passing standard on the science assessment increased 43% (Fruge & Lewis, 2009).

The district's dropout rate decreased from 1.2% in 2005-06 to 1% in 2009-10. Moreover, the district's rating on the Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System increased from "academically acceptable" in 2005-06 to "recognized" in 2010-11. These results show that a district focus on curriculum, instruction, and assessment in partnership with data coaches yielded significant progress in student learning.

During year two, administrators and data coaches were surveyed to assess campus fidelity of implementation of the job description. According to administrators, 11 out of 16 respon-

dents rated their school-based data coach as extremely effective in conducting classroom demonstrations and visits to empower teachers to change instruction as deemed necessary by data. One principal said, "Our data coach is the nexus between student assessment data and targeted instruction in the classroom. For the first time, instruction is focused on specific objectives that are identified through various student assessments. The data discussions with teachers have dramatically improved the level of instruction in the classrooms."

In addition, 14 out of 16 administrators rated their data coach as extremely effective in disaggregation and use of data results for student performance accountability to examine instructional efficacy. One high school principal wrote, "The disaggregation of data that [my data coach] does on a continual basis has not only improved instruction in the classroom and increased implementation of best practices, but it has also helped to identify strengths and weaknesses that exist in our classrooms."

This year, the impact on teacher practice was evident in a survey on the effectiveness of data coaches. A high school math teacher wrote, "While teachers are aware that data is available for their students, they can become so busy with daily activities that they fail to take the time to go over the data and to reflect on how it impacts their own students. Data coaches help teachers take the time to examine their data and then utilize the data in a meaningful way. They also help teachers find ways to help their students based on the data."

The presence of a job-embedded data coach ensures that teachers find the time for data analysis, which results in professional growth that directly impacts daily instructional practice. Such opportunities transform a school into an adult learning environment, where teachers learn what works best in each other's classrooms and problem solve around current and real issues rather than waiting to attend a workshop or inservice.

LESSONS LEARNED

Districts that are considering coaching or are in the early stages of adopting a coaching approach should consider certain lessons learned by Lewisville district administrators. At the outset, administrators hiring data coaches must have a well-defined job description establishing personality characteristics of a successful data coach. Administrators must pay attention to the characteristics of teacher leaders to determine an appropriate school-based coach. School-based data coaches must be able to create relationships with teachers based on trust, honesty, and respect in order to promote change within a school.

Data coaches also should be available to teachers when needed. Initially, some data coaches were still teaching one class, and many middle school coaches currently share test coordination responsibilities. As a result, data coaches are forced to split time between teacher needs and other school duties. Ideally, the coach should be able to address teacher concerns immediately instead of having to wait until time permits.

When planning for professional learning of the coaches, districts must require school leaders to learn alongside the coach to ensure that the learning translates back to administration as well as the faculty. Typically, after professional learning, the coach was expected to bring new knowledge back to the school. An unintended consequence of this delivery method was some administrators' dependence on the data coach as the sole instructional leader on campus. In order to create a sustainable model of professional learning at the school level, more than one leader must be involved in implementing the district vision and goals so that crucial instructional conversations can happen even if the data coach is not available.

A high school math teacher wrote, "Data coaches help teachers take the time to examine their data and then utilize the data in a meaningful way. They also help teachers find ways to help their students based on the data."

AN INVESTMENT IN GROWTH

An initial investment in school-based coaches allows teachers to build capacity for continuous professional learning and growth through data conversations. Wellman and Lipton (2003) write that when educators regularly analyze data, reflect on current practice, and create action steps based on that information, they "plant the seeds of their own professional development. Teachers harvest these seeds in the successes of their students" (p. x). In a time of shrinking resources, it may seem that an investment in a nonteaching position is not feasible, but in the end, the payoff is invaluable.

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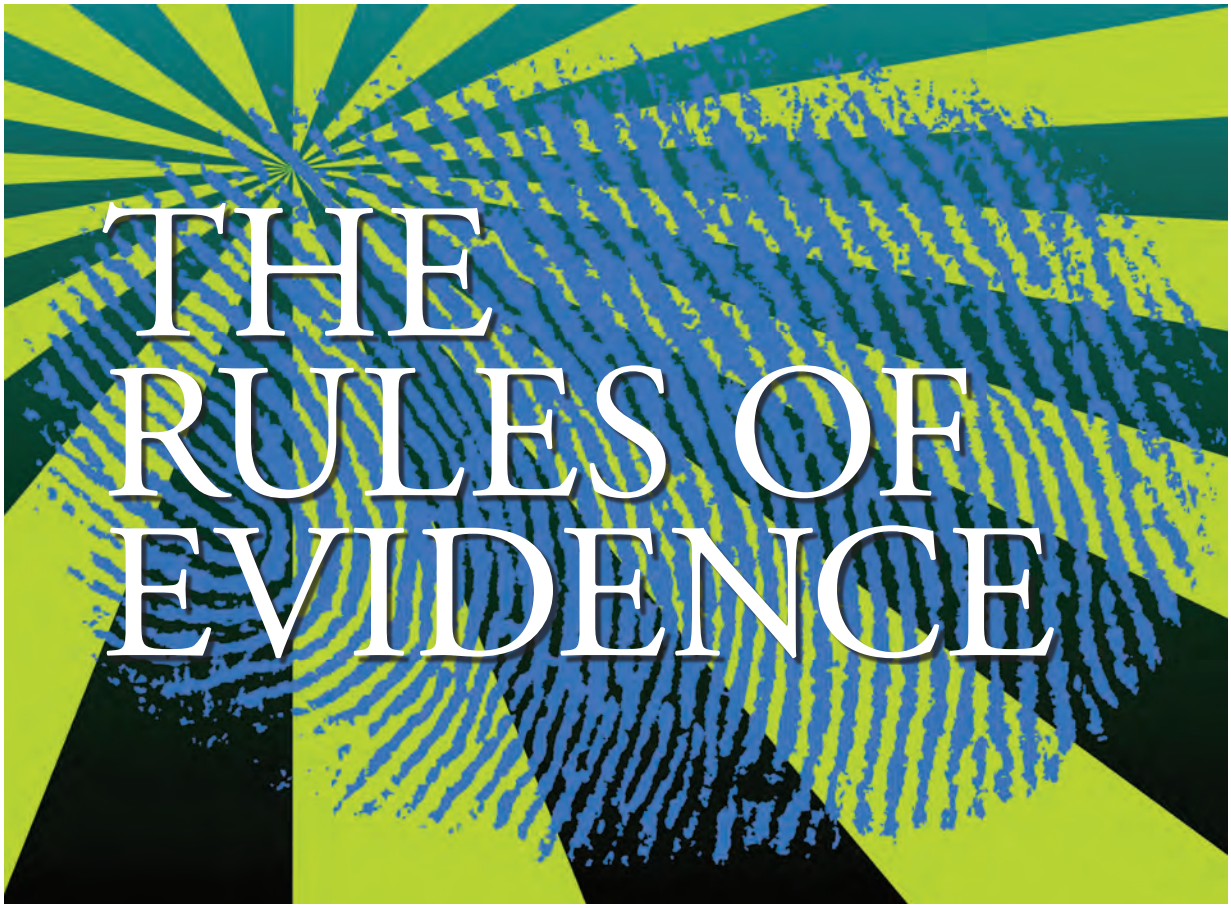

THE RULES OF EVIDENCE

FOCUS ON KEY POINTS TO DEVELOP THE BEST STRATEGY TO EVALUATE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

By Thomas R. Guskey

A few years ago, I learned an important lesson about gathering evidence on the outcomes of professional learning endeavors. Several colleagues and I were asked to evaluate the effects of a new program that had been implemented in elementary schools throughout an entire state. The program involved extensive professional learning for the educators responsible for implementation and was quite costly. We collected information on student achievement, affect, and behavior from four years before implementing the program and three years following. We also gathered data on teachers' recommendations of students for special services and student disciplinary actions during that time.

Comparing year-to-year results based on hundreds of students, we found no significant improvement on any measure of student learning. Some measures actually showed declines. According to the evidence gathered, the new program had produced no overall benefits in student achievement, affect, or behavior, despite its high cost.

We presented the results of our evaluation to a legislative committee, using colorful charts and graphs to show that the program had not yielded the promised improve-

ments. When the committee chair asked for questions or comments following our presentation, one committee member responded, "All this may be true, but … " and went on to relate a touching story about her niece, a shy and quiet young girl who had struggled terribly in school. She was embarrassed by her learning difficulties and felt belittled by her classmates. Following implementation of this program, according to the committee member, her niece gained new confidence, interest, and enthusiasm for learning. She was now doing better than ever, seemed excited about learning, and loved going to school each day, much to the surprise and delight of her parents.

Later that day, the committee voted to continue funding the program for two more years.

The lesson I learned that day is this: When gathering evidence on outcomes, one must always consider the perspective of stakeholders. Both the committee member and we presented detailed evidence on program outcomes. But in the end, an impassioned story about one particular child carried more weight than did impersonal charts and graphs based on data from hundreds of children. The committee member's story was evidence that the other members of the committee trusted and believed.

Gathering evidence on the outcomes of any professional learning experience can be a challenging and complicated task. It involves consideration of a wide variety of perceptual and contextual issues, some obvious to education leaders and others not. Those who want to succeed in this process may find the following points helpful.

ALWAYS BEGIN WITH THE OUTCOMES.

Many educators consider outcomes to be synonymous with results or consequences. But if viewed in a broader context, outcomes also may be seen as goals or aspirations. They describe what we hope to accomplish and set forth the criteria by which success will be judged. In this sense, outcomes are not something to consider only at the end when activities are completed. Instead, they must be where we begin planning all professional learning endeavors (Guskey, 2005, 2007a).

As Covey (2004) reminded us, we must always "begin with the end in mind." Before thinking about the content or format of any professional learning, planners must first consider the outcomes they hope to accomplish. This requires addressing two essential questions: What outcomes do we want to achieve, especially with regard to student learning, and what evidence best reflects the achievement of those outcomes? These two questions should mark the starting point in all planning discussions.

Deciding what outcomes we want to influence typically involves careful analysis of current data on student learning. Results from large-scale assessments, common formative assessments (Ainsworth & Viegut, 2006), and individual classroom assessments can show areas where students might be struggling or not performing as well as hoped. School records can identify behavior problems related to attendance or discipline. Classroom observations and discussions with students often help pinpoint areas of concern. Interviews with teachers, focus groups, or discussions in professional learning communities (DuFour, 2004) are especially valuable when trying to identify persistent trouble spots in efforts to help all students succeed in mastering complex concepts and skills.

Gathering evidence on the outcomes of any professional learning experience can be a challenging and complicated task. It involves consideration of a wide variety of perceptual and contextual issues.

Analyzing the performance of subgroups of students can bring additional insights to these discussions. Considering the learning progress of students of different backgrounds and ability levels, language experiences, ethnicity, race, and gender can be particularly informative. Looking at differences between classrooms and between schools often yields new understandings of problem areas as well.

The key point in these discussions is to ensure that the focus remains on student learning outcomes. Because of concerns about professional learning processes, conversations often skip to the content and activities in which participating educators will be involved. We begin debating new ideas, strategies, innovations, programs, and instructional technologies. While these are important issues, remember that they are means to an important end that must be determined first. After deciding the specific desired outcomes with regard to student learning, decisions about the most appropriate means will be much easier to make.

DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS TRUST DIFFERENT EVIDENCE.

Addressing the second essential question — what evidence best reflects achievement of those outcomes? — can prove just as thorny. One might think after reaching consensus about outcomes that it would be easy to decide what evidence to gather on those outcomes. But the validity and believability of different sources of evidence varies among stakeholders.

A few years ago, I conducted a study asking groups of educators in three states to judge the validity of various sources of evidence on student achievement (Guskey, 2007b). All three states had implemented comprehensive, statewide assessment programs with high-stakes consequences for educators and students. The educators ranked 15 indicators of student learning based on which they believed "provides the most trustworthy information about students' academic performance" (p. 19). Evidence included teacher observations, portfolios of student work, grades, and scores on state assessments and nationally normed standardized assessments. I then compared the rankings of school administrators to those of teachers.

Teachers put more trust in results from their own assessments of student learning: classroom assessments, common formative assessments, and portfolios of student work.

Results showed that, while educators generally held similar views, the perspectives of administrators and teachers differed significantly. Administrators perceived nationally normed standardized assessments, state assessments, and district assessments to be more valid indicators of student achievement than did teachers. In contrast, teachers granted more validity to classroom assessment results, classroom observations, homework completion and quality, and students' class participation and behavior than did administrators.

Even when planners agree on the student learning goals or outcomes of professional learning endeavors, different stakeholders may not agree on what evidence best reflects improvement in those outcomes. And just as was true in the story of our presentation to the legislative committee, the trust stakeholders place in that evidence can impact their interpretations of effectiveness and their subsequent decisions based on those interpretations.

USE MULTIPLE SOURCES OF EVIDENCE.

As Learning Forward's Data standard states, "Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning" (Learning Forward, 2011). Since stakeholders vary in their trust of different sources of evidence, it is unlikely that any single indicator of success will prove adequate or sufficient to all. Providing acceptable evidence for judging the effects of professional learning will therefore require multiple sources of evidence. In addition, these sources of evidence must be carefully matched to the needs and perceptions of different stakeholder groups.

Take the testimonial offered by the committee member at the start of this article. From a technical perspective, testimonials are a very poor source of evidence. They are highly subjective, often unreliable, and based on a limited sample of observations, but they can be emotionally stirring, personally compelling, and extremely influential. The story told by the committee member turned out to be the kind of evidence that the other committee members understood, trusted, and believed.

It would be inappropriate to use testimonials as the only source of evidence in evaluating the effectiveness of professional learning endeavors. But as one of several sources of evidence, testimonials offer a rich, powerful, and personalized account that should never be ignored.

Results from large-scale state assessments and nationally normed standardized exams may be important for accountability purposes and need to be included. School administrators generally consider these to be valid indicators of success. Teachers, however, see limitations in large-scale assessment results. These assessments are generally administered only once a year, and results may not be available until several months later. By that time, the school year may have ended and students promoted to another teacher's class. So, while these assessments are important, many teachers do not find such results particularly useful.

Teachers put more trust in results from their own assessments of student learning: classroom assessments, common formative assessments, and portfolios of student work. They turn to these sources of evidence for feedback to determine if the new strategies or practices they are implementing really make a difference. Classroom assessments provide timely, targeted, and instructionally relevant information that also can be used to plan revisions when needed. Since teachers comprise a major stakeholder group in any professional learning, sources of evidence that they trust and believe will be particularly important to include.

Finally, while evidence on student academic achievement will always be essential, affective and behavioral indicators of student performance can be relevant as well. These include student surveys designed to measure how much students like school, their perceptions of teachers, fellow students, and themselves, their sense of self-efficacy, and their confidence in new learning situations. Evidence on school attendance, enrollment patterns, dropout rates, class disruptions, and disciplinary actions are also important. In some areas, parents' or families' perceptions may be a vital consideration. This is especially true in initiatives that involve changes in grading practices, report

cards, or other aspects of school-to-home and home-to-school communication (Epstein & Associates, 2009; Guskey, 2002).

HOW EVIDENCE IS GATHERED IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE EVIDENCE ITSELF.

Gathering evidence needs to be an explicit and transparent process. Just as students should never be surprised by the evidence used to evaluate their performance, educators should not be surprised by the evidence selected to measure the outcomes of their professional learning. Not only should they know what those sources of evidence will be, they should have a voice in choosing them.

The best way to ensure transparency is to address questions about what evidence to gather during the initial planning process. Deciding at the start what evidence best reflects a particular outcome brings purpose and direction to professional learning. Involving different stakeholders in deciding what evidence to use and in gathering that evidence further guarantees results will be seen as credible and trustworthy. It also reinforces the idea that improvement is an ongoing process that requires input and collaboration among all stakeholders.

PLAN FOR COMPARISONS.

In many cases, evidence on outcomes is gathered from a single school or school district in a single setting for a restricted time period. Unfortunately, from a design perspective, such evidence lacks reliability and validity. Whether results are positive or negative, so many alternative explanations may account for the results that most authorities would consider such outcomes dubious at best and meaningless at worst (Guskey & Yoon, 2009).

It may be, for example, that the planned professional learning did lead to noted improvements. But maybe the improvements were the result of a change in leadership or personnel instead. Maybe the community or student population changed. Maybe changes in state policies or assessments made a difference. Maybe other simultaneously implemented interventions were responsible. The possibility that these or other extraneous factors influenced results makes it impossible to draw definitive conclusions.

The best way to counter these threats to the validity of results is to include a comparison group — a similar group of educators or schools not involved in the current activity or perhaps engaged in a different activity. Ideal comparisons involve the random assignment of students, teachers, or schools to different groups. Because that is rarely possible in most education settings, finding similar classrooms, schools, or school districts is the next best option. In some cases, involvement in professional learning can be staggered so that half of the teachers or schools that volunteer can be randomly selected to take part initially, while the others delay involvement and serve as the comparison group. In other cases, comparisons can be made to "matched" classrooms, schools, or school districts that share similar characteristics related to motivation, size, and demographics.

Using comparison groups does not eliminate the effects of extraneous factors that might influence results. It simply allows planners greater confidence in attributing the results attained to the particular program or activity being considered.

FOCUS ON OUTCOMES AND EVIDENCE

Just as we urge teachers to become more purposeful in planning instructional activities, we need to become more purposeful in planning professional learning. We must determine up front what improvements we seek in terms of student learning and what evidence best reflects that improvement to the satisfaction of all stakeholders involved. That will improve the likelihood of our success and yield more valid evidence on the effectiveness of current activities while informing future professional learning.

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Photo by SHERRY LOWE

Principal Barbara Bergman (standing at left) chats with primary teachers (clockwise) DeAnna Franzen, Juhee Yi, Toni Cummings, and Julie Peck as they sort reading trends for their students at the May 2011 Data Day.

PUT DATA IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

A deeper understanding of achievement results is leading change in one Washington district

By Barbara Bergman

Teachers in the Federal Way (Wash.) Public Schools had no shortage of student data. Standardized test scores, unit tests, and report card grades were as familiar to educators as reading, writing, and arithmetic. With the onset of statewide testing in the 1990s, data analysis was expanded to cover a multitude of state learning goals in grades 4, 7, and 10. There were more than 90 of these learning goals for Washington's 4th graders in reading alone, with the expectation that teachers would somehow track progress on all of them.

State testing was later expanded to include annual assessments for grades 3-8 and high school. And in Federal Way, district assessments, administered three times a year, were added for core subjects at each grade level. Data was plentiful. What the district lacked was a way for teachers to make sense of and make meaningful decisions around student data.

To remedy this, the district introduced "Data Days" in 2004. A waiver from the state granted three nonstudent days to allow time for teachers to review and respond to

data. With a list of district outcomes, staff and principals at each of the 37 schools in Federal Way had the freedom to plan agendas that would better acquaint teachers with the achievement data for their school. A second objective was to develop instructional plans to address the trends and individual needs highlighted in the data.

USING DATA TO SET GOALS

Job one on the first Data Day was to present data in a meaningful and digestible format. The district's assessment office created templates that showed comparative graphs of each school's standardized tests and state test data over the past five years as well as summaries of results from recent district and classroom assessments.

Next steps for teachers included:

1. Draw general trends from the data: What are areas of strength and weakness for our school in reading? In math?

2. Identify grade-level needs: How does the grade-level data compare to school data and state data regarding strengths and weaknesses in reading? In math?

3. Use classroom and individual data to complete the needs assessment: What skills in reading and math need to be targeted this year for the students in my classroom?

Using this information, teachers set measurable goals in reading and math for their students, selected best-bet strategies to address the identified needs, and mapped out intervention plans for individual students who need additional support. An example of Sherwood Forest's intervention plan appears on p. 48.

Disaggregated data used to determine Adequate Yearly Progress brought new information for teachers to work with:

- How did the progress of students in specific cultural and ethnic groups, of English language learners, of students from economically disadvantaged families, and those with Individualized Educational Plans compare with the achievement of all students in the school?
- What specific strengths and deficits were uncovered in the data for each group?

At first, many teachers were uncomfortable with these conversations. With time and practice, however, teachers were able to analyze trends and needs in disaggregated data with the same care and proficiency they applied to the rest of their data.

SHERWOOD FOREST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

After the first Data Day, teachers at the district's Sherwood Forest Elementary School were well on their way to moving data from PowerPoint presentation to lesson plans. They used assessment information to identify specific learning goals and took pride in student results. They shared instructional strategies that were working. At multiple staff meetings and two more Data Days that year, teachers itemized assessments, tracked student progress, differentiated their instruction, planned with support staff, and refined their goals. They discussed Mike Schmoker's videos *Data Driven Decisions to Improve Results* (Video Journal, 2000) and compared their practice to an expert's recommendations.

Data had been invited as a passenger, but was not yet in the driver's seat. Four steps were critical in giving data front-row status and moving student achievement forward. These were implemented and modified over the next several years.

1. The school committed time to regular grade-level collaboration.

Teachers tried various formats and meeting times, refining the protocols before arriving at a five-step collaboration cycle led by teacher facilitators and focused on student data (see box above).

Professional development focused on collaboration models and purposes as teachers practiced together and shared feedback. Then they practiced some more and gave

SHERWOOD FOREST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 5-STEP COLLABORATION CYCLE

1. Identify the priority area.
2. Create SMART goal for priority area. Between meetings, gather student data and information on priority area.
3. Correlate best practices to current practices.
4. Identify instructional strategy we want to use or try. Use it and bring results.
5. Analyze results and refocus efforts.

DATA WALK

Purpose: The data walk is used to give teachers time to study student data, discuss it with their colleagues, and consider implications for the school and classroom.

Materials: Charts posted around the room, displaying student data in reading and/or math for each grade level; sticky notes for teacher observations and questions; pens or pencils; timer.

Time: 60-75 minutes.

STEPS

1. Create charts displaying student data for each grade level in word-processing program, and enlarge to poster size at local copy store; or create chart by hand and fill in labels and data points. Display charts on walls around the meeting room.
2. Have group form teams of four to five people with broad representation (primary, intermediate, specialist, paraprofessionals).
3. Appoint a timekeeper. Have teams visit each data poster and discuss:
   - What ahas do you notice?
   - What questions do you have about the data?
4. Have each group leave at least one sticky note with an aha and at least one sticky note with a question about the data.
5. After five to seven minutes, timekeeper gives signal to move to the next poster.
6. After teams have visited all of the posters, reassemble the whole group and ask group members to divide into grade-level teams and assign a recorder. Each team visits its own grade-level poster for 12 to 15 minutes, reads the comments on the sticky notes, and discusses implications for the school and for its grade level. Recorder writes these comments on a sheet of paper.
7. Reconvene the whole group and ask members to be seated. Each recorder reads comments and posts them in the front of the room.
8. Discuss: What did we learn as a school about the strengths and needs of our students from today's data walk?
9. Facilitator copies comment sheets and returns them to each grade level for use in future collaboration and goal setting.

more feedback. A collaboration coach from the local educational service district was hired to provide professional development to professional learning communities during the first three years. She exchanged information with the whole staff on Data Days and met monthly with grade-level representatives to celebrate successes and problem solve any issues. Each year, the conversations deepened: How can we best structure our time to benefit teacher practice and student learning?

2. Teachers identified and implemented researched instructional practices over several years.

These practices include reciprocal teaching, Origo computational strategies, Guided Language Acquisition Design, and Marzano's nine instructional strategies. Professional development continues to focus on these priorities. In addition, the school instituted minimum 90-minute instructional blocks for reading and math, and teachers and principal developed a standard lesson design. Every year, new staff members need training in these common practices. A full-time instructional coach works closely with both new and veteran staff to provide whole-group, small-group, and one-on-one professional development differentiated to the needs of each teacher. Student data is at the center of their conversations.

3. Each grade level identified specific assessments that could be administered on a regular basis to measure student progress.

Examples include letter and sound assessments, reading fluency assessments, cloze comprehension assessments, and computational fluency assessments.

In 2011-12, Federal Way Public Schools implemented a K-12 standards-based system with electronic record keeping.

This gave teachers the ability to monitor student and classroom progress on up to 15 standards identified for each subject and grade level. A parent portal allows secondary schools to share student progress on each of these standards with families, and this portal will be available to elementary parents this year. Clear learning standards, with regular feedback to students and families, help to provide a coordinated plan for each student's success.

4. Grade-level teams identified and shared interventions for struggling students.

What strategies were most effective for increasing fluency, building vocabulary, or increasing problem-solving skills? While answering these questions, grade-level teams began to standardize interventions and develop a list of differentiated strategies for a variety of instructional needs. Classroom teachers, along with support staff and volunteers, select from a tool kit of specific strategies to address learning deficits or respond to accelerated learners.

Federal Way Public Schools
Federal Way, Wash.

Number of schools: **37**
Enrollment: **21,696**
Staff: **2,584**
Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	**36.7%**
Black:	**11.5%**
Hispanic:	**22.9%**
Asian/Pacific Islander:	**16.8%**
Native American:	**0.9%**
Other:	**11.2%**

Limited English proficient: **13.4%**
Languages spoken: **113**
Free/reduced lunch: **53.43%**
Special education: **11.8%**
Contact: **Diane Turner**, chief communications officer
Email: **dturner@fwps.org**

Sherwood Forest Elementary School
Federal Way, Wash.

Enrollment: **468**
Staff: **51**
Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	**38.90%**
Black:	**8.67%**
Hispanic:	**18.82%**
Asian/Pacific Islander:	**20.08%**
Native American:	**0.42%**
Other:	**13.11%**

Limited English proficient: **16.1%**
Languages spoken: **6**
Free/reduced lunch: **47.37%**
Special education: **9%**
Contact: **Barbara Bergman**, principal
Email: **bbergman@fwps.org**

CHANGES AT SHERWOOD FOREST

What have Sherwood Forest's teachers and principal learned from eight years of data study and the 24 Data Days set aside to formalize those studies?

1. Careful data study uncovers trends in the big picture. Data drives conversations when Sherwood Forest teachers gather. At the fall Data Day, teachers look at multiple sources of data to identify strengths and needs of this year's students. A Data Walk (see p. 46) is one strategy they have used to dig deeper into assessment results.

In 2011-12, Sherwood Forest teachers looked at profiles of K-5 students who were receiving extra support in reading and math and discovered that the majority of those students were either active or former English language learners. They determined a need to focus on language-rich classrooms and vocabulary instruction across all grades to address this trend. In one response to this need, district and building ELL staff provided articles, training, modeling, and consultation for teachers. Teachers learned new strategies at staff meetings and reported back on what worked best.

2. Eight years of Data Day conversations have led to more communication across grade levels. On Data Days, grade-level teams use protocols to share data with their adjoining grades, allowing them to start the year with a heads-up on the strengths and needs of their students. In addition, they share instructional practices that were most successful for the previous year's class. One team developed practice strategies and parent communications that improved students' computational fluency and shared them with other grade levels. In another example, grade levels developed step-by-step processes for math problem solving that were aligned from kindergarten through 5th grade. Intermediate teachers are joining forces next year on an integrated project called Salmon to Sound. As part of the study, students will hatch salmon eggs and release them into Puget Sound.

3. The attention to student data has moved collaborative conversations from a focus on teacher planning and professional development to a focus on student learning. Yes, that focus can still include planning and professional development, but now the nine-day collaboration cycle is grounded in a specific, measurable goal, and teachers gather evidence to evaluate the outcome. They meet every nine days and follow the five-step collaboration cycle (see p. 45). For each of the steps, teams give themselves permission to consolidate or expand the timeline as needed.

NEW LEARNING, NEW PRACTICES

Becoming data wise is a core requirement for today's educators, and it requires time for conversations and inquiry that lead to new learning, new practices, and new levels of collaboration. When instruction is data-driven and teachers are data-wise, a new belief system emerges in the school community. Teachers gain confidence that if they collect the right data for students and use it to create the right learning opportunities, they can change lives. Therese Pense, a 3rd-grade teacher, says, "It's easy to collect data, but it's another thing to actually use it. Our formative assessments and collaboration meetings have provided the time to use data to differentiate instruction, and it has changed my teaching."

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STUDENT INTERVENTION PLAN

At the fall Data Day, teachers develop intervention plans for students who are not meeting standard. A three-tier identification system is used. These plans are updated and monitored throughout the year.

Tier I: meeting or exceeding standard;
Tier II: approaching standard, classroom interventions indicated; and
Tier III: below standard; classroom interventions and support services indicated. (Examples: Title I/Learning Assistance Program, English language learners, special education services, after-school math or reading support.)

DIRECTIONS: After reviewing the data, write the name of each student in your class who may need Tier II/III support and check the appropriate box for reading and/or math. (Multiage teachers, indicate grade level.) In the space at right, indicate what supports you will provide in terms of structure and content, strategies, or resources.

STUDENT NAME	GRADE LEVEL	READING TIER II/III	MATH TIER II/III	Classroom interventions for Tier II & III students in reading What will look different in your classroom in terms of structure and content, strategies, or resources for reading instruction for these students?
				Classroom interventions for Tier II & III students in math What will look different in your classroom in terms of structure and content, strategies, or resources for math instruction for these students?

PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN ENERGIZE LEARNING COMMUNITIES

PRACTICAL TIPS PUT THE EMPHASIS ON *LEARNING*

By Lois Brown Easton

At School A, the professional learning community is engaged in implementing a mandated mathematics program.

At School B, the professional learning communities are grade-level teams of teachers and classroom aides pursuing their own agendas for improvement according to school goals.

At School C, mixed grade-level and subject-area professional learning communities meet during the school's faculty meetings to discuss issues the principal and others have raised.

Which is the true learning community?

The groups at all three schools may be professional learning communities, but the extent to which they are professional *learning* communities may vary. *Learning* is more than just the middle word in *professional learning communities.* Learning is living, according to Peter Senge and associates: "Learning is at once deeply personal and inherently social; it connects us not just to knowledge in the abstract, but to each other" (Senge et al., 2000, p. 4).

ADULT LEARNING IS ESSENTIAL

Adult learning is essential in schools. Learning Forward's Scholar Laureate Shirley Hord observes, "The improvement of our schools seldom results from mandates. What has become very clear is that change (its adoption and implementation) cannot occur without the provision of ongoing and long-term learning for the professionals" (Hord, 2011, p. xv).

Professional learning communities make sense. As a structure, the premise of these communities promised a lot to the profession. However, some communities have proven disappointing, and the concept as a whole is in danger of fading like many initially exciting structures for change, such as small schools and block scheduling. Structures need substance to succeed. Substance comes from a set of design principles related to what people do within

the structure, and why and how they do what they do. As Hord notes, "Despite the abundance of information and resources committed to professional learning, we have much to learn about how to create and maintain effective communities of professional learners" (2011, p. xvii).

In some cases, professional learning communities are just a new name for doing the same things as before. As one teacher commented, "Professional learning communities are just meetings dressed up in their Sunday best." "It's business as usual," another teacher reported. "We discuss things, but we do nothing. Nothing changes." "It's a gripe session," a disillusioned principal reported. "All they do is argue and bellyache, moan and groan."

Think about Schools A and C. Their learning communities are the type that disappoint educators because they may be professional and they may be collaborative, but they are not about learning. In School A, the work is focused on implementing a mandate. Usually, mandates come from outside a school; someone has imposed them from the state, district, or even the federal level. Implementing something is, by definition, carrying out or fulfilling. Think of a horse with blinders on. People in professional learning communities with a mandate see what they are allowed to see. They learn how to fit the mandate into the existing system but do not really learn the system — much less work to change a faulty system — or find important work to do as a result of their learning.

In School C, the work is superficial — discussions. In a typical discussion, advocacy flourishes and opinions ricochet around the room. Participants seldom pause to understand and build on ideas. What happens as a result of these discussions? Usually nothing. And, next week, there's a new issue to discuss.

School B may have true professional learning communities. Faculty are grouped by grade level, perhaps by choice, and these groups appear to be self-organizing, seeking improvement of student learning in their own ways, and referencing school goals to keep their focus.

DESIGNS FOR LEARNING

One way to think of adult learning is to consider it as a process of design, "of finding coherence, what works in a particular environment. [Learning design] is about purpose and what furthers purpose. Design is not engineered nor imposed from the outside. It is neither a formula nor a set of foolproof steps. Design is open to opportunity" (Easton, 2011, p. 1).

It is tempting to think that real professional learning communities — communities in which people really learn — can be organized from the outside or that starting them is a matter of five easy steps. The implication is that there is a right way to work toward a right outcome (and, conversely, a wrong way and a wrong outcome).

In reality, real learning organizations in all areas (corporate, nonprofit, educational) are messy. Margaret Wheatley, a management consultant and writer who studies organizational behavior, says people like to "pretend that we [a]re in control every step of the way" (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1996, p. 37). We prefer to talk about "executing plans" rather than reveling in surprises (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1996, p. 37).

Sometimes professional learning communities are mandated from some level, such as building, district, or state. The structure may be mandated, but learning is better if educators in learning communities are given a chance to figure out how to organize themselves specifically and what to do in these communities related to a school's goals. The more learning communities are dictated or mechanized, the more the learners in them are deprived of the opportunity to become true learning communities. Ideally, the learning community structure itself emerges from a need or purpose and passion: "We must help our 3rd graders learn and love to read nonfiction." The specific structure similarly emerges ("We'll work in grade levels" or "Let's form cross-disciplinary teams").

Structure emerges from self-organization. Wheatley states, "We work with what is available and encourage forms to come forth. We foster tinkering and discovery. We help create connections. We nourish with information. We stay clear about what we want to accomplish. We remember that people self-organize and trust them to do so" (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1996, p. 38).

Anarchy? Chaos? Not for long, if learning is the goal. Wheatley suggests that "fuzzy, messy, continuously exploring systems bent on discovering what works are far more practical and successful than our attempts at efficiency" (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1996, p. 25). Learning means that we work with many people, encouraging discoveries and learning from mistakes, helping everyone to find what works.

Educators who want to find their way between one extreme or the other (formulaic implementation driven from the outside versus chaos) might want to consider using the following principles of design as guidelines for effective professional learning communities.

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

1. Professional learning communities emerge from passion and purpose.

Rather than originating from outside the school setting, effective professional learning communities emerge from the inside. They come from someone's curiosity ("I

really would like to figure out why students do not do homework") or pain ("I wish students would think deeper about history than they do") or data ("We can't keep losing students between 9th and 10th grades"). Curiosity, pain, or data (often all three together) lead to purpose: "We'd better do something about this."

Practical tip: A principal or other administrator can nudge professional learning communities into existence by asking questions such as:

- "What do wish we could do better here?"
- "What bothers you about the way our students learn?"
- "Why do you think so many 7th-grade boys avoid reading on their own?"

Rather than coming up with solutions, principals can come up with questions and encourage others to do the same. Professional learning communities with genuine questions will seek relevant and effective solutions.

2. Professional learning communities are sensitive to the environment.

If only we could replicate what works in other schools or scale up particular reforms. Such is the lament of educators and policymakers. Educators say they don't want to reinvent the wheel, but replication and scaling up are not universally effective. Even in seeking to replicate or scale up someone else's solution, educators need to do some wheel reinvention of their own. They might not reinvent the concept of the wheel, but they do need to engage in customizing the wheel to the car. Imagine a tractor's wheel on a shiny new sports car. Imagine a school that adopts block scheduling without the slightest idea of how to use the extra class time to help students learn.

Replication and scaling up don't work because the relationship of problems to solutions is neither simple nor direct in schools. Most school change problems are not "tame problems," according to Garmston and Wellman (1999, pp. 223-224). School change involves mostly "wicked problems," they note. "Tame problems" lead straight to solutions; "wicked problems" defy known algorithms. They are "tenacious and nonlinear. They contain unpredictable barriers and recur, folding back on themselves. … Existing ways of thinking cannot handle wicked problems" (p. 223).

Consider these problems: curriculum that is misaligned or not aligned at all, either vertically or horizontally, assessment that doesn't match curriculum, instructional strategies that lead to low-level learning, teacher evaluation, a toxic school culture, student disengagement from learning. These problems cannot be resolved through simple replication of others' solutions. Solutions to these problems are likely to require some reinvention of the wheel, customizing to the nature of the school, and considerable messiness.

Practical tip: One way to be sensitive to a school's environment is to do a scan of congruence between what educators in that school believe and how well their school exemplifies these beliefs. The table above suggests how a group might engage in a congruence scan.

CONGRUENCE SCAN

What we believe	Reality: How this belief is manifested in our school	Evidence to support our reality	What we might do to enhance congruence between beliefs and reality
We believe that all students are creative.	We provide art classes for all students except those in special education.	Schedules for special education.	Make art classes a part of the day for special education students.

While they are engaged in the congruence scan, educators might also investigate what seem to be unusual successes within their environment. These successes might be considered examples of "positive deviance," uncommon strategies that work with the same students and under conditions that others also have (Pascale, Sternin, & Sternin, 2010; Sparks, 2004). Analyze these internal examples of success before going outside for solutions. Ask, for example, "What is it about our music program that seems to fire up our students?" Apply what is learned about success in one area, such as the music program, in other areas: "What would active engagement, such as what we see in our music program, look like in our mathematics classes?"

3. Professional learning communities are a result of relationships.

In the haste to get something done, education reforms are usually fast-forwarded, starting before people are ready to start and finishing before the reform has shown results. Funders seek the next newest thing. Legislators have only a couple of years to prove that their reform ideas work.

One aspect of successful group work is sacrificed in the hurry to enact reform: relationships among people. Crafting and continuing these relationships take time and can be cut in favor of agendas, to-do lists, and progress reports.

However, relationships can affect those agendas, to-do lists, and progress reports, often in a poisonous manner. More than one team has gone astray because of people problems — people who were "negative no matter what the issue was (the 'yab-buts'), dominated the discussion, advocated for their own ideas rather than engaging through inquiry, remained uninvolved, criticized but never stepped forward to help the group improve, or clung to the past" (Easton, 2011, p. 37).

Practical tips: Go slowly at first, building relationships (see the Four Corners tool on pp. 53-54 for a way to build relationships), uncovering assumptions, and discovering common ground. Focus on purpose and passion. Focus on the students. Have some rules of engagement (sometimes known as norms)

that are built, referenced by, and used by the group to make sure all voices are heard. Have a rule of engagement related to what members of the community do when someone breaks a rule; make it permissible to call for a "rule" or "norm" check. At the end of meetings, have the group evaluate how well it has done on the rules and resolve to address issues that arise from the group evaluation.

4. People in professional learning communities acknowledge a variety of solutions and processes.

If professional learning communities are to work, they must be full of possibilities. The minute a participant thinks the outcome is preordained or the process is set in stone, disillusionment sets in. People feel used, even if what they are doing is otherwise valuable. If the hidden agenda is to implement a new mathematics program, do not ask a professional learning community to do it. Form a consortium of mathematics teachers (and others) who know that is their task. Let the professional learning community engage in learning how well students are learning mathematics and seek solutions for improving their learning, which may or may not involve implementing a new program.

Because professional learning has so often focused on implementing something, educators often come to their professional learning communities with the mindset that asks: "What is it that we're supposed to do?" They expect to be told what the group is to accomplish rather than discover for themselves what is needed in their particular environment. They may keep waiting for someone to tell them what to do, unused to being asked to explore the possibilities. Such a mentality lessens the learning and thinking that participants may be able to do.

Practical tip: Reverse the order of typical reforms. Do not start with *what* to do. Instead, start with *why* something needs to be done, which leads to a discussion of what gives us purpose and how strongly people feel about the problem. Then consider *how*: How do we want to work together? How could we organize ourselves? Finally, consider *what*: What, exactly, will we do (at least in terms of first steps)? A professional learning community might need to engage in several why-how-what cycles before finding what is needed to create better learning conditions for students. Intermediate *what* steps might include obtaining additional data from a variety of sources, such as student interviews or looking at student work. For more information on reversing the order of typical reforms, see Simon Sinek's video, *How Great Leaders Inspire Action* (Sinek, 2009a), or read his book, *Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* (Sinek, 2009b).

5. Professional learning communities energize thinking.

The signs that a community is not working are boredom, fatigue, and a feeling of ineffectiveness. Sighs in members' voices, reluctance to spend another hour in their learning communities, and complaints to colleagues might mean that people are not energized by their work together. People in successful learning communities work beyond meeting times, extending their inquiry into hallways, offices, and faculty lunchrooms, after school and in the summer. Learning energizes people. A professional learning community that is missing its middle word is probably not working for people. Check principles 1-4 to see what is amiss.

Practical tips: Provide many opportunities for voice. Start meetings with an opener that gets every voice in the room. For example, have people engage in a protocol known as 30-60-90 about a question related to the group's work (such as "How well does our school schedule work?"). For 30 seconds, they find and interview someone they don't know well and are, themselves, interviewed on the question, both of them taking notes. For 60 seconds, they repeat the procedure with someone else they don't know well, sharing not only their own ideas but also those of their first partner. For 90 seconds, they repeat the procedure with another partner, sharing their own and ideas from their previous two partners (D. Moraio, personal communication, 2005).

Prepare for individual and group processing and sharing time after each significant activity. Close with reflection and sharing.

Have people do online surveys to register their feelings about a professional learning community meeting, and then share and discuss with the whole group the results of those surveys. To take the temperature of the group, occasionally conduct one-legged interviews (Hall & Hord, 2001) during which members interview each other on a key question for as long as they can stand on one leg. To gauge how people feel about an issue, use the "fist to five" strategy: Holding up a fist is a definite "no" vote for something; holding up five fingers is a solid "yes" vote; a fist, one, two, and even three fingers indicate conditional attitudes that require exploration (Easton, 2011, pp. 80-81).

Have learning community participants make regular 15-minute presentations of learning to the whole faculty, perhaps during time set aside for these presentations in faculty meetings. Leave time for feedback and questions and answers. Have learning communities keep a portfolio of artifacts related to the group's work (Easton, 2011, pp. 79-80), perhaps referencing them during their presentations of learning. Have groups maintain a blog or establish a Wiki to share their learning. Make sure that these adult learners have a strong voice in what's happening to them and what they are doing.

KEEP THE PROMISE

Shirley Hord states, "The premise, the purpose, the promise of the professional learning community is the learning of the professionals of the staff — in schools, those certified, responsible, and accountable for delivering an effective instructional program for all students" (2011, p. xvi). Ensure that professional learning communities live up to their premise, accom-

Continued on p. 54

FOUR CORNERS

A TOOL FOR BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Overview

When people work together in groups, each individual has a preference for how the common work is best undertaken.

Goals

- To acquaint people with four essential elements of group work;
- To explain how these elements interact and how people's preferences for particular elements affect group work; and
- To help groups understand which of the four elements they prefer, which their organizations prefer, and the implications of these preferences.

Part 1	In part 1, participants build an understanding of various elements of group work and discuss their individual tendencies to gravitate toward one element over others.	
PROCESS		
1	Post four signs around the room that read: • **North:** Action • **South:** Community • **East:** Vision-making • **West:** Structure	Post chart paper next to each sign.
2	Ask participants to look at the signs. Explain their meanings: • **Community** people often check to see if everyone is OK. They may speak up when a break is needed. • **Structure** people often ask when, how, who says, how long, what time? • **Action** people are apt to say, "Enough talk. Let's move on this!" • **Vision-making** people will often inquire about why something is being done, what the purpose is, or if an idea has implications that have not been considered.	
3	Ask participants to move to the corner that best represents the element that they feel is most essential to group work and/or most typical of what they contribute to a group.	
4	While in their corners, ask participants to discuss with others in that corner what their element brings to a group. Have them post their thoughts on the following questions on chart paper, using words, drawings, or symbols: a. What are the positive attributes that you bring to a group? b. What challenges might your group give to a group? c. What is a motto that represents your group? d. Who is a famous person that captures the essence of your group? This could be a nonfictional or fictional character.	
5	After 15 minutes of discussion and preparation, have a member from each group explain that group's poster to the whole group.	
6	Give each group a turn to explain its posters.	

FOUR CORNERS **A TOOL FOR BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS**

Part 2	In part 2, individuals form new groups, mixing those with different group work preferences to explore the resulting impact on group discussions. The impact will vary according to the focus of the discussion.
1	Ask individuals to leave their groups to create new teams with representatives from each original group. The new teams will perform a task you have selected, related to the work the group is to do that is as real as possible (such as planning a professional learning event). Have the new teams spend 15 minutes before beginning the task introducing themselves to the other members of their groups, stating their preferences, and discussing the following topics: **a.** Look at the distribution in your group. If it is lopsided, consider what that might mean for the group. For example, a group with nearly everyone in **vision-making**, with a few people in **action** and **community**, and no one at all in **structure**, may have a tendency to talk far too much, frustrating the action people. The group will have to work conscientiously together to be sure members develop some workable structures. It is important to acknowledge the strength of each preference as well as to understand the potential downsides of each one when taken too far. **b.** The need for balance between building a vision and taking action is often at the core of group dissatisfaction. **Vision-making** people can be very powerful in their perspective, often being the point people in a change initiative. It helps to name the nature of a meeting. If **vision-making** is the focus, invite the **action** people to bring their knitting or some Silly Putty — something to occupy their hands as the group works through making a vision. If **structure** is conspicuously absent, focus a meeting on developing workable structures. **c.** Notice the kinds of questions and language each preference uses: • **Community** folks often check to see if everyone is OK. They may speak up when a break is needed. • **Structure** folks often ask when, how, who says, how long, what time? • **Action** people are apt to say, "Enough talk. Let's move on this!" • **Vision-making** people will often inquire about why something is being done, what the purpose is, or if an idea has implications that have not been considered.
2	Ask participants to share what was discussed with the whole group, allowing five minutes for each group. Once the discussion is finished, have the group turn to its scheduled "real" work. After the meeting, ask participants to assess how knowing each other's preferences and the group's profile helped with doing their work.

Continued from p. 52

plish their purpose, and achieve their promise by ensuring that learning dwells in the center of the structure.

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If a school wants to transform a culture, everyone in it must value conversation

While no single conversation is guaranteed to change the trajectory of a school, a student, a relationship, or a life, any single conversation can. If only we understood what a conversation is! It comes from the Latin, "conversare," which means an exchange of ideas and sentiments. Too bad many people don't have conversations; they have monologues. I recently gave in to an invitation for brunch with a friend who loves me, but who leaves me exhausted and frustrated. True to form, she talked nonstop for two hours, and, even when she asked a question, she interrupted my answer to change topics, prefacing yet another lengthy side trip with, "This probably doesn't interest you, but…" She was right — it didn't interest me. And she knew it, but couldn't stop herself, failed to notice my eyes glaze over, and didn't hear my silent scream when she said, "Let's do this again soon" as we parted. I've talked with this friend about her tendency to hijack a conversation and go on at length about topics and details that bore me, explained the effect on me, asked her to do less of this, to no avail, so though I won't cut her out of my life, I won't spend more one-on-one time with her. My counsel to myself and to you is: Don't be this woman! Try this today: Don't talk as much as you usually do. Dial it down 50%. Instead, ask questions. Listen to the answers. Really listen. Ask another question. Say, "Thank you."

— Susan Scott

By Angela Brooks-Rallins

Our school, which serves urban youth, is in Chicago's South Loop. We have stakeholders in the building on any given day, touring the school and meeting with or learning from staff. At the end of those meetings, one common theme becomes evident: There is a culture of calm, safety, and care in our school. Visitors consistently remark on the feeling they get when they walk into the building and share statements made by students and staff that they feel cared for.

As I reflect on how this culture came about, I realize relationships had to be built. The leadership team and I knew we needed to allow stakeholders to work together each day to build trusting relationships. During the first week of school, the staff developed norms for how we would approach our work. These agreed-upon norms included giving each student a new start each day, making positive phone calls to parents, having tough conversations with parents to ensure we were partnering with them, and setting norms for how we would interact with each other.

Teachers collaborated across curriculum, within grade-level teams, and in core content departments. Leaders created structured times to meet with focused agendas that allowed teams to share celebrations along with discussing team members' concerns. The opportunity was there to challenge each other intellectually and to be respectful. Any staff member could stop in my office for a conversation. Each voice was important and needed to be heard.

Brooks-Rallins

Not only did the adults in the building begin to build relationships, so did the students. We set expectations with students regarding how we communicate with each other. The expectations remained the same for any given conversation — student and

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

student, teacher and student, student and administrator, teacher and teacher, administrator and teacher, parent and teacher, parent and administrator, etc.

TOO MUCH IS AT STAKE

These relationships were built over time. They were built through conversation. Many times in schools and organizations, people move fast to ensure productivity and achievement. If a school wants to transform a culture, everyone in it must value conversation. Too much is at stake not to sit down, face to face, and listen to each other.

Listening and learning from staff and students was the most valuable use of my time. I heard frustrations, fielded concerns, and knew the only way they would trust me is to honor my word that I had given in a conversation.

One such conversation happened with members of the junior class. I was the new leader arriving near the end of their sophomore year. It was a challenging year for this class, and a group of them came to the school office one summer day to arrange to transfer to another high school for their last two years. I overheard the conversation with the office staff. I had two choices — sit in my office and let the students go or go out to the students and families to listen and learn to determine how we could mend the relationship between the school and the students and families.

Too much is at stake not to sit down, face to face, and listen to each other.

After about 30 minutes of conversation and hearing from the students and families, I told the students: "You live a disciplined life. You are taught to have an open mind, to communicate effectively, and to challenge each other intellectually. Go gather a group of students from your class, call me to set up a meeting, and we will all meet to determine how we can move forward to make your high school experience amazing. Once you have taken initiative and you still do not feel it is the right fit, I will be OK with you choosing a different school. I am not OK with you doing so without a conversation."

They took me up on my offer to have a conversation. I learned so much from 15-year-olds that day. In August, we created more afterschool programs that interested them. In September, we implemented an award system to celebrate student accomplishments. In October, student council was in full swing, which created a purposeful space for student voices. By December, seniors had privileges and performed community service within our school community once a week. Today, we have students who say that this school is a family. They are fully engaged in their educational experience.

I learned that students want to be heard, involved in shaping their educational experience, and they desire strong relationships. This single conversation built a strong bond between the junior class and me, the principal. Now other students see conversations are part of our daily routine. My office is filled with students who are seeing missed opportunities and expressing ideas on how to improve our school. As we work to implement their suggestions, we see that often the students are right — we needed to make changes.

TRUST BUILDS AND TRICKLES DOWN

This is one example of the many transformations we have had over the school year. Stakeholders who are concerned have a space to talk. Leaders have a space dedicated to listen, learn, and impact change. Students and staff perform more optimally.

Once the culture of the school or organization is consistent, calm, and safe, trust begins to build. This trickles down to the students. The staff will shine and show up authentically each day for each other and for the students in their teaching. Students will be able to see this, and the impact is astounding.

As education leaders, we have many bottom-line goals we have to meet for state and federal compliance. Test scores and attendance are two factors that immediately come to mind. Our school saw significant growth in ACT scores this year. We have an attendance rate of 95% for the school year. Students are engaged and attending school, which has impacted our bottom-line results. The conversations were the game changer.

We still have a lot of work to do. I challenge myself to develop relationships with staff members so that they feel cared for, supported, and heard on a regular basis. This begins with developing school and team leaders around conversations, building their capacity to have skillful, authentic conversations, and not allowing them to hide or avoid any conversation.

CONVERSATIONS CREATE CULTURE

As partners in education, leaders are obligated to create and sustain a nurturing culture for all students to learn and achieve. It is our obligation to create and sustain a culture that is positive and supportive for staff to thrive. When I hear, day in and day out, "I feel cared for" and "I feel heard, safe, and supported" from students, I know I have served my school community. I have fulfilled my obligation. Consider the conversations that you are or are not having and how they impact your relationships and your results. Consider how you might lead differently so that you are cognizant that the conversation is the relationship.

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Guerra

Nelson

Acknowledge the painful history behind some common expressions — and don't repeat them

In a previous column, we discussed how deficit beliefs are often hidden in everyday language and serve to reinforce the idea that certain groups of people are not equal to others. Because such language is so familiar, the underlying message tends to go unquestioned until it is used in the presence of someone who takes offense and speaks out. Bridget Arndt, a graduate student in our educational leadership program, had just such an interaction in her high school math classroom that changed her perspective and demonstrated the power of words. *See her story below and our conclusions on p. 58.*

Casual comment demonstrates the power of words

By Bridget Arndt

One day early in my teaching career, classroom discussion was escalating out of control with complaints about an upcoming test. In an attempt to use sarcasm to regain control, I shouted, "Stop your cotton-pickin' bellyaching." A young African-American male student quickly responded, "You don't have to be so racist!" I didn't realize the impact of what I had said. The whole class fell silent. I asked him to explain what he meant. He said that my statement offended him as a black person whose ancestors included slaves who picked cotton.

To me, the phrase was just an expression associated with being frustrated, and I had used it often. I never equated any racial slur with the meaning. I can only imagine how this made him feel — the stories he had been told from his great-grandparents about slavery in the South, the oppression and the suffering that his relatives had experienced, and the negative connotation associated with picking cotton. What had I been thinking when I used the expression all these years? Moreover, why had no one ever confronted me about this before? Had I used other deficit thinking and not been aware? It never dawned on me that I was a white woman making a racial comment.

After discussing the incident, I apologized for offending him and asked that he forgive my ignorance. He responded favorably, acknowledging that I don't display prejudice toward anyone and that I had not intended to discriminate against him.

When I got home from school that evening, I immediately called my mom. I needed to talk to someone about the incident. I needed to know if this made me a racist or if my childhood beliefs were seeping out — beliefs my parents and I had tried so hard to change after I was adopted. As an educated woman, I couldn't believe that I had used that phrase and never realized the implications of my words. My mom assured me that I am not racist. She told me that a racist would have used the phrase purposefully to evoke power over a group or individual. I had no malicious intent when I said the phrase. I just chose the wrong words to express my frustration.

This interaction made me aware of what and how I say things every day as well as my perceptions of people. The student's response heightened my awareness of my behaviors and challenged my thinking. I had always considered myself compassionate and accepting of the diversity of others. The incident with my student made me take a step back and question myself. I needed to re-evaluate my interactions with all people, not just my students.

Nine years later, that classroom incident remains fixed in my memory. I believe that I am more aware of diversity and have better relationships with students because of that awareness. My classroom environment fosters a mutual respect for all people. I was able to turn a negative into a positive by using it as a learning experience that has benefited my daily interactions with diverse populations. ■

Bridget Arndt's reflection is an example of culturally responsive practice. Although initially unaware of the negative connotation of her words, Arndt accepted responsibility when called on it. Rather than react on automatic pilot or become defensive, she listened to her student's feedback and apologized for her ignorance. She also reflected on past interactions and considered other offensive phrases that she may have used. This experience made a lasting change in her professional practice and personal life.

However, Arndt's reaction is not typical. When confronted about the offensive nature of certain expressions and words, educators often become defensive. They may feel threatened by students' comments or perceive them as a lack of respect for authority. In turn, students may feel disrespected by the teacher's apparent lack of concern about using offensive language. When neither teacher nor student backs down, a power struggle ensues, often resulting in negative consequences for the student, such as a discipline referral. Misunderstandings like this contribute to the disproportionate representation of certain groups, particularly African-American males, in discipline settings. This is why Arndt's response to the student was so powerful. She accepted that her words could be perceived as racist even though that was not her intent. She did not waste time arguing about whether the phrase is or is not inherently racist. Taking responsibility for the effect of our words and actions even when no offense was intended is an important aspect of culturally responsive practice.

Because language is based in history and culture, there are many words and expressions that we use casually without realizing they have negative connotations for some people. Almost every educator will eventually utter an offensive word or phrase. Many will be called on it. The key is to accept that the word or phrase has a negative connotation and stop using it. Culturally responsive educators do not argue about whether the word should or should not be considered offensive or whether it is offensive only to a small group. Once they know it is offensive even to one, they simply stop using it.

CONSIDER THE CONTEXT

When educators are mindful of the power of words, identifying other words and expressions that may be perceived as offensive becomes easier. One expression resurging in popular language is the use of "off the reservation." This expression is commonly used to suggest someone thinks differently from the norm or is out of control. A columnist on the *Forbes* magazine website used it to describe Joe Biden's support of gay marriage (Ungar, 2012), a blogger used it to describe Colin Powell's assessment of the situation in Iraq ("Is Colin Powell's Endorsement Absurd?," n.d.), and AOL news used it to describe Pat Buchanan's actions ("Pat Buchanan Goes Off the Reservation," 2011).

Although this expression may seem harmless, one must consider the context in which it was coined. Originating in the 1800s when American Indian tribes were relocated and confined to reservations, tribes resisting and leaving designated land were said to be "off the reservation" and viewed as hostile and subject to military assault. This resistance was seen as a problem that had to be controlled. Because of this association, regardless of the intent, some find this expression offensive. Given the few positive references made about American Indians in history and numerous negative symbols, pictures, and expressions such as "stop acting like a bunch of wild Indians," most readers might assume a negative connotation.

Since a number of our words and popular expressions used today were originally coined to describe dominant relations over groups in history, many have negative connotations. While this dominance manifested in overt acts of racism has decreased over the last 60 years, the words and expressions coined to describe these attitudes and practices continue to be painful reminders of the past for many students and their parents. Acts of intolerance resulting in humiliation and fear for these students' great-grandparents, grandparents, and even parents are part of their history and not easily forgotten.

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In each issue of *JSD*, Patricia L. Guerra and Sarah W. Nelson write about the importance of and strategies for developing cultural awareness in teachers and schools. 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/publications/jsd..

We're even faster and friendlier

Learning Forward has unveiled a redesigned website with streamlined features that allow members and new visitors to find the information they want most with a single click.

"We know that thousands of people visit our site each day, and that they're looking for very specific, practical information about effective professional learning," said Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward. "Our intention is to make sure that members can quickly locate the resources they need to build their knowledge and skills."

Conference registration

Publications — especially the bookstore page

From the home page, users can register for conferences, access resources on the Standards for Professional Learning, search Learning Forward publications, shop the bookstore, sign up for e-learning programs, or view archived webinars.

E-learning — webinars

Visitors looking for topics geared toward specific roles can click on links for teacher leaders, school leaders, system leaders, external partners, and policymakers.

Learning Exchange or featured member

Members wanting to connect with other members can search the member directory, join online discussions on the Learning Exchange, or sign up for learning communities. The website attracts between 5,000 and 8,000 visitors daily.

The emphasis of the new site is on fast and friendly — allowing visitors to access needed information and resources quickly while also highlighting the faces and voices of Learning Forward's worldwide community.

A PLAYBOOK FOR DATA:
Real-life scenario demonstrates Learning Forward's Data standard in action.
By Stephanie Hirsh and Shirley Hord

In this excerpt from their book, *A Playbook for Professional Learning: Putting the Standards Into Action,* the authors describe a real-life scenario from a small, rural district to illustrate how to use the essential components of the Data standard in daily practice, offering advice and analysis as well as guided reflection questions. A tool from the book offers an activity to promote team discussion.

THE X FACTOR IS 'WHY':
A clearly defined purpose boosts the impact of data analysis.
By Anne Conzemius

Leadership's role is to begin any data conversation by stating the purpose of the analysis and to provide appropriate resources, tools, and processes that teachers need to make good use of collaborative learning time. When data are well-organized, relevant, and targeted toward specific purposes, teachers' professional learning will be efficient and profound.

TEACHERS HARNESS THE POWER OF ASSESSMENT:
Collaborative use of student data gauges performance and guides instruction.
By Phillip Herman, Peter Wardrip, Ashley Hall, and Amy Chimino

While better use of data by schools and districts is critical to improving student outcomes, the most direct impact comes from teachers using evidence of student thinking and understanding to improve instruction. Two 4th-grade teachers have developed a weekly assessment that helps them —and their students — gauge how well each student understands and can demonstrate mastery of learning standards.

LINK DATA TO LEARNING GOALS:
Common district assessments connect teaching effectiveness to student performance.
By Kay Psencik and Rhonda Baldwin

Douglas County (Ga.) Public Schools is using common district assessments to create common learning experiences for all students and establish a clear connection between teacher behaviors and student growth and performance. One teacher team's story illustrates how using Georgia's teacher evaluation system to inform professional learning improved teacher practice and student results.

SCHOOL-BASED COACHES PLANT SEEDS OF LEARNING:
A districtwide approach to data analysis promotes job-embedded learning and improved teacher practice.
By Rachelle Hill and Lori Rapp

Lewisville (Texas) Independent School District introduced school-based data coaches to assist teachers in using data to increase student achievement. Coaches schedule content-specific data conversations, help teachers create action plans, and follow up to ensure plans have been implemented. Test scores show the district is closing the academic gap between white and limited English proficient students.

THE RULES OF EVIDENCE:
Focus on key points to develop the best strategy to evaluate professional learning.
By Thomas R. Guskey

Just as we urge teachers to become more purposeful in planning instruction, we need to become more purposeful in planning professional learning. Gather the most valid evidence on the effectiveness of professional learning by determining the outcome at the start, using multiple sources of data, and including comparisons.

PUT DATA IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT:
A deeper understanding of achievement results is leading change in one Washington district.
By Barbara Bergman

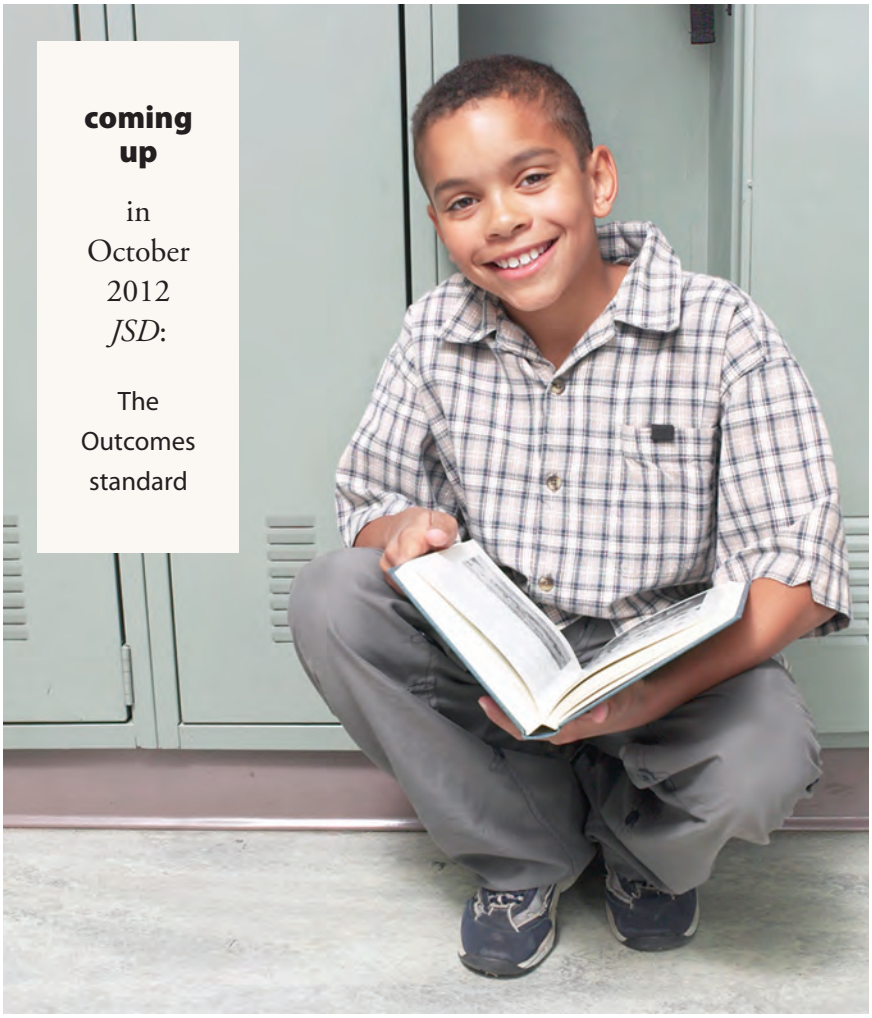
Federal Way (Wash.) Public Schools sets aside three days each year for teachers to analyze student data. Using what they've learned, teachers set measurable goals in reading and math for their students, select best-bet strategies to address the identified needs, and map out intervention plans for individual students who need additional support.

feature

LEARNING DESIGNS

PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN ENERGIZE LEARNING COMMUNITIES:
Practical tips put the emphasis on *learning*.
By Lois Brown Easton

Ineffective professional learning communities threaten the concept as a whole. The answer lies in building a structure that explains what people do, and why and how they do it. Using principles of design and practical tips for implementing them can infuse educator work groups with a passion and a purpose for learning.



coming up

in October 2012 *JSD*:

The Outcomes standard

INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

columns

Collaborative culture:
If a school wants to transform a culture, everyone in it must value conversation.
By Susan Scott

Skillful conversations help leaders develop relationships with staff so they feel cared for, supported, and heard.

Cultural proficiency:
Acknowledge the painful history behind some common expressions — and don't repeat them.
By Patricia L. Guerra and Sarah W. Nelson

Taking responsibility for the effect of our words and actions even when no offense was intended is an important aspect of culturally responsive practice.

From the director:
How data can help us answer the $2.5 billion challenge
By Stephanie Hirsh

Getting the Data standard right can help us understand when and how we are successful and where we need to improve.

Writing for JSD

- Themes for the 2013 publication year are posted at **www.learningforward.org/publications/jsd/upcoming-themes.**
- 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/publications/jsd/writers-guidelines.**

New reports highlight effective professional learning

Learning Forward has released two reports to give educators, policymakers, and community members a deeper understanding of high-quality professional learning and the role it plays in building educator capacity.

Meet the Promise of Content Standards: Professional Learning Required focuses on the critical role that professional learning plays in implementing content standards. Outlining a vision for educators supported through high-quality professional learning, the brief describes elements of effective professional learning as well as recommendations for action for educators at the federal, state, system, school, and individual level.

The brief is part of Learning Forward's initiative Transforming Professional Learning to Prepare College- and Career-Ready Students: Implementing the Common Core.

With an immediate focus on implementing Common Core State Standards and new assessments, the initiative provides resources and tools to assist states, districts, and schools in providing effective professional learning for current and future education reforms. The initiative is supported in part by the Sandler Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and MetLife Foundation.

The second report, *Building a Learning Community: A Tale of Two Schools,* documents the elements that make professional learning communities effective. Authors Dan Mindich and Ann Lieberman present case studies of two schools drawn from survey data of 33 New Jersey public schools involved in a state-sponsored professional learning community training program.

Interviews and observations at the two case-study schools showed that a set of predicted variables — vision, community, resources (including time to meet and teacher expertise), and processes — seemed to be connected to the development of collegial professional practice, and that all of these factors were influenced by principal leadership and the wider distributed leadership structures at the schools. Among the key findings: Sustaining focus is vital, collegiality is not enough, and leadership is key.

The report is produced through Learning Forward and the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE). This is the final report from the multiphase research initiative Status of Professional Learning.

TO ACCESS THE REPORTS:

• *Meet the Promise of Content Standards: Professional Learning Required*
www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core

• *Building a Learning Community: A Tale of Two Schools*
www.learningforward.org/publications/status-of-professional-learning

book club

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES AND THE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAM: A Guide for School-Building Improvement
By Dean T. Spaulding and Gail Smith

For instructional coaches, no two days are ever the same. This book melds theory and practice to show how coaches can seamlessly integrate themselves into the fabric of the school and help teachers improve their practice from day one. Dean Spaulding and Gail Smith address common challenges of coaches and instructional leadership teams, including:

- Observing classrooms and providing formative feedback;
- Reaching out to the hesitant or resistant teacher;
- Adapting data and analysis into usable information for the team; and
- Recruiting, training, and supporting new instructional coaches.

Journal entries based on real-life experiences give an inside look at the day-to-day work of an instructional coach and the power of coaching to improve teacher effectiveness. The book also includes field-tested activities, materials, and forms for collecting data, navigating busy days, and organizing information.

Through a partnership with Corwin Press, Learning Forward members can add the Book Club to their membership at any time and receive four books a year for $69. To receive this book, add the Book Club to your membership before Sept. 15. For more information about this or any membership package, call **800-727-7288** or email **office@learningforward.org.**

Take steps to create a simple model of feedback that helps practice bloom

on board
KENNETH SALIM

Last year, I bought my parents a new gadget for Christmas called a Fitbit. Like a supercharged pedometer, the Fitbit is a small device that they wear during the day and even through the night. It collects vast amounts of data, including the number of steps they take, calories burned, and information on sleep patterns. The data syncs with an online profile so that my parents can see how active they have been over the last week, month, or year. Perhaps the most ingenious feature is an icon of a flower that appears to grow or shrink depending on how active my parents have been. It's an elegant and simple feedback mechanism that not only provides a status report, but also presents information that motivates my parents to change their exercise behavior. Could a similarly structured model of data-based feedback be designed to improve professional learning practices?

In schools and systems, we have no shortage of valuable data. Annual student performance data on state assessments are reported each fall. Formative assessments provide more regular benchmark data on student progress. Student attendance, behavior, and grade data are readily accessible. Similarly, data on teacher and administrator practice is collected more systematically. New educator evaluation systems and rubrics based on professional standards promise to generate more information on the state of our practice. Surveys on educator beliefs, school climate, and leadership provide important data on the views of teachers, administrators, parents, and students on school and district culture.

How do we ensure that we make these data actionable for professional learning?

Like the flower icon on the Fitbit, how can data provide a simple snapshot of progress for professional development practices? Here are two ideas for moving toward this type of feedback model:

1. Use implementation and outcome data to make professional learning decisions.

Evaluation of professional learning typically assesses participant reaction through questionnaires or feedback forms, but seldom applies deeper levels of information, including participant use of new knowledge and skills and the effect on student learning outcomes (Guskey, 2000). Mapping the connections among student data, evidence of educator practice, and professional learning is complex but can support a more robust and refined feedback model.

2. Identify the metrics that are grounded in current research.

Reeves and Flach (2011) write that they have observed many schools where "the availability of data is inversely proportional to meaningful analysis." Similarly, it is easy to become overwhelmed by feedback data from practitioners. Using research to identify the key metrics that should be collected can be helpful in streamlining analysis and generating actionable data.

These are not simple tasks, but ones that require collaborative thinking and problem solving by practitioners and researchers. By drawing on this expertise, we can create the simple and elegant model of feedback that helps practice blossom at all levels.

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

REFERENCES

Guskey, T. (2000). *Evaluating professional development.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Reeves, D.B. & Flach, T. (2011, August). Meaningful analysis can rescue schools from drowning in data. *JSD, 32*(4), 34-40. ■

Nominations open for new Learning Forward awards

If you or someone you know plans, advocates, or leads professional learning that gets results, Learning Forward wants to showcase your work and celebrate your success. Submit nominations for Learning Forward's new Annual Awards and help us recognize the exemplary work being done at all levels of professional learning. Here are the award categories:

- **Advancing Professional Learning** honors one individual for his or her contributions to demonstrate and document the impact and results of professional learning. Eligible nominees: Professional researchers, doctoral students, and school-based action researchers.

- **Excellence in Professional Learning Practice** honors two individuals (one district-level and one school-level) for their implementation and portrayal of Learning Forward's purpose, definition, and Standards for Professional Learning. Eligible nominees: School superintendents, professional development or other central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders.

- **Leading for Professional Learning** honors one individual for creating support systems, developing capacity in others, and advocating for effective professional learning. Eligible nominees: Those who work in state/provincial education agencies, higher education institutions, school districts, and state affiliates.

- Deadline for nominations is **Sept. 28.**
- Learn more at **www.learningforward.org/get-involved/awards.**

VOLUNTEER FOR NEW ANNUAL AWARDS COMMITTEE

JOIN THE COMMITTEE that will review nominations for Learning Forward's new Annual Awards, to be presented during the Annual Conference in December. The committee will discuss, review, and score nominations in three categories: Advancing Professional Learning, Excellence in Professional Learning Practice, and Leading for Professional Learning. Teams will read and rate three to five applications and participate in two conference calls. The review process runs Sept. 28 to Oct. 15.

If you are interested in serving on the committee, email your name and contact information to awards@learningforward.org by Sept. 14. You will be contacted by email with further details about participation.

SHOWCASE FOR LEARNING TEAMS

EACH SUMMER, Learning Forward presents the **Shirley Hord Learning Team Award** to honor excellence in professional learning. Based on Learning Forward's definition of professional learning, the award recognizes a school team that successfully implements the cycle of continuous learning for professional learning that results in student achievement. The nomination cycle for this award will begin again in early 2013.

Learning Forward thanks these generous sponsors of the 2012 Summer Conference

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Help review conference proposals

Learning Forward is looking for reviewers who will ensure that conference sessions meet participants' needs and align with Learning Forward's expectations for high-quality professional learning. A wide range of members work with the Conference Program Planning Committee to review session proposals using a carefully developed protocol and rubric. Reviewing can be done from any computer.

If you are available to review proposals either remotely or in Minneapolis, Minn., on Sept. 21, **contact Suzanne Siegel at suzanne.siegel@learningforward.org.**

Spread the word, save some money!

You probably talk to friends about your cat, that political biography you're reading, and your newest guilty pleasure on television, but when was the last time you talked about your membership in Learning Forward? We know you appreciate the benefits of our organization — now share the great things Learning Forward has to offer with a friend.

Each new member you refer enters your name into a drawing for a free five-day registration to Learning Forward's Annual Conference Dec. 1-5 in Boston. You will also receive $10 off your next membership renewal for every new member you recruit. Now that's something to talk about.

Learn more at www.learningforward.org/join-renew/referral-program.

APPLY BY SEPT. 19 TO PRESENT AT 2013 SUMMER CONFERENCE

Share your knowledge and expertise with colleagues from around the world by applying to present a concurrent or roundtable session at Learning Forward's 2013 Summer Conference, July 21-24, 2013, in Minneapolis, Minn.

Summer Conferences inspire, inform, and assist teacher leaders and administrators in providing the most powerful forms of adult learning. Conference strands are aligned to the Standards for Professional Learning. Proposals are due Sept. 19. Presenters and presentation teams will receive a discount on conference registration.

For more information, contact Suzanne Siegel at suzanne.siegel@learningforward.org. Submit proposals online at http://proposals.learningforward.org.

LEARNING FORWARD CALENDAR

Sept. 19:	Deadline for proposals to present at 2013 Summer Conference.
Sept. 28:	Deadline for nominations for Learning Forward's Annual Awards.
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.
July 21-24, 2013:	Learning Forward's 2013 Summer Conference in Minneapolis, Minn.

Must-Haves

from the Learning Forward Bookstore

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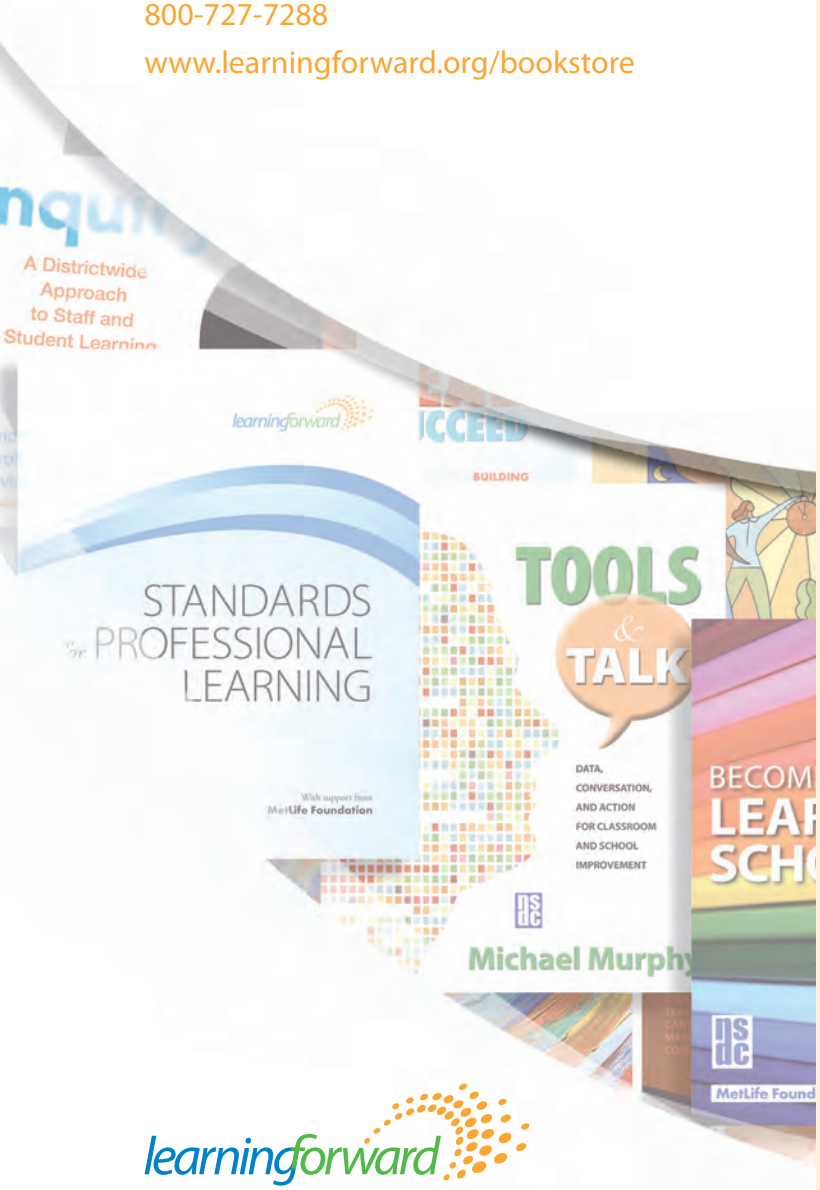

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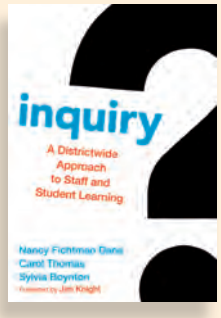

INQUIRY: A DISTRICTWIDE APPROACH TO STAFF AND STUDENT LEARNING

Corwin with Learning Forward, 2011

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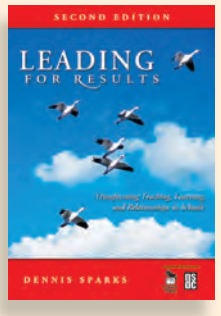

LEADING FOR RESULTS: TRANSFORMING TEACHING, LEARNING, AND RELATIONSHIPS IN SCHOOLS, *2nd Edition*

Corwin with NSDC, 2007

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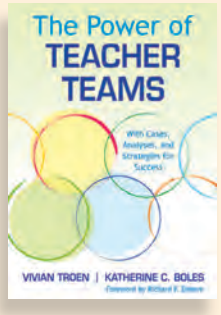

THE POWER OF TEACHER TEAMS: WITH CASES, ANALYSES, AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

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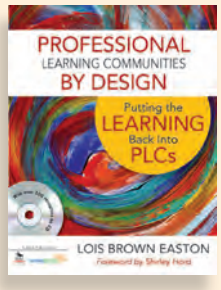

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES BY DESIGN: PUTTING THE LEARNING BACK INTO PLCs

Corwin with Learning Forward, 2011

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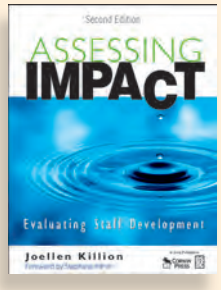

ASSESSING IMPACT: EVALUATING STAFF DEVELOPMENT, *2nd Edition*

Corwin with NSDC, 2008

B371, 264 pp. + CD-ROM
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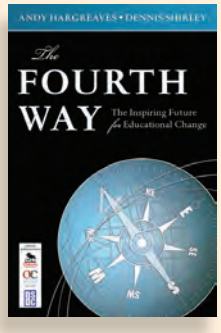

THE FOURTH WAY: THE INSPIRING FUTURE FOR EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

Corwin with NSDC, 2009

B430, 168 pp.
$20.00 members
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How data can help us answer the $2.5 billion challenge

It is upsetting to me any time I hear a policymaker talk about what a waste of money professional development is. For example, Arne Duncan cites the $2.5 billion a year in federal funds for professional development and mentions that when teachers hear that figure, they either laugh or cry (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). While Duncan's stance has recently shifted to emphasize that professional development can be better and that we need more of it, staff in the Department of Education reference conversations with educators who complain that much of their professional development has failed to address the real challenges they face in schools. Policymakers also point to research studies that indicate particular professional development didn't achieve its intended outcomes and thus declare it a failure.

While we know intuitively that professional learning is important, we know it can work, and we know we need more, all of our professional learning efforts are not consistently effective. Getting the Data standard right can help us understand when and how we are successful and where we need to improve. Let's begin with the end in mind, clarify the outcomes we expect, and, most importantly, outline how we will measure whether we achieved our goals.

This takes work at many levels. For each professional learning effort a teacher is involved in, the source of classroom data to document its impact may be different. For example, the work a teacher does with a coach to strengthen her higher-order questioning skills may be documented through different strategies than what a schoolwide team does to measure its learning to support a new literacy curriculum.

While we know so much about meaningful data collection and use, we still have a lot of work to do in this field, and I'd start with these action steps:

- Let's build consensus on what we mean by generally acceptable evidence of impact of professional learning.
- Next, let's identify or build tools and resources that ensure the data collection process is a seamless part of the teacher, coach, and principal workday.
- As part of this work, we must ensure that all data collected advances educator and student performance.
- Finally, we need to ensure the data collection process is viewed as helpful rather than a compliance activity.

There are many tools and processes already developed and in use that take these steps. However, these occur in isolated situations. If all educators don't have access to this data and the knowledge to use it well, how can they demand the professional learning that drives the results we all want for students?

Once our systematic use of data helps us communicate with compelling information about the value of professional learning, I know we'll hear a different response from our policymakers. I can just hear Secretary Duncan saying, "We are fortunate that we have billions of dollars allocated by Congress annually to support the continuous improvement of our educators. We must ensure that we use those funds in a way that supports the day-to-day problems of our educators. Professional learning is the improvement strategy that builds both individual and collective capacity for results, and we must ensure we get everything possible from it."

•

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

REFERENCE

U.S. Department of Education. (2012, February 15). *Teachers get R-E-S-P-E-C-T: Remarks of Secretary Arne Duncan at a teacher town hall.* Available at www.ed.gov/news/speeches/teachers-get-r-e-s-p-e-c-t. ■

INTRODUCING COACHES CONNECT

Instructional coaches encounter novel and challenging situations daily. Whether preparing for critical feedback conversations with colleagues, facilitating teacher-to-teacher learning teams to improve student results, or dealing with resistance to change, instructional coaches need ongoing support from experienced master coaches.

Through Coaches Connect, the Center for Results provides instructional coaches with on-demand support to meet these challenges using a one-to-one coaching platform powered by Tutor.com.

For what it costs to employ one instructional coach, a district can provide expert support for up to 120 coaches by certified Center for Results master coaches. Coaches Connect will guide a district's instructional leaders through their challenges to provide effective feedback to educators.

Organizations that provide support for coaches through the Learning Forward Instructional Coaches Academy are eligible for a 5% discount on the on-demand Coaches Connect service.

Coaching's benefits are clear: Research shows 90% of educators will implement new ideas with fidelity when their learning includes job-embedded coaching. Not only does coaching lead to better practice, it is also more cost-effective than other education strategies.

Expert advice. Center for Results master coaches have trained more than 15,000 instructional coaches in 20 states and provinces in the United States and Canada. Coaches Connect uses leading-edge technology that delivers expert guidance when and where instructional coaches need it, maximizing the impact of instructional coaches and increasing teacher effectiveness. Coaching support complements learning facilitated through the Learning Forward Instructional Coaches Academy as well as state and district professional development.

Organizations that provide support for coaches through the Learning Forward Instructional Coaches Academy are eligible for a 5% discount on the on-demand Coaches Connect service.

Master coaches from the Center for Results give instructional coaches the advice and support they need to face today's challenges. Master coaches help district coaches:

- Drive critical changes in behavior and teaching practices to improve student achievement;
- Partner with principals to provide the services teachers need to improve teaching and learning;
- Support teachers in the classroom by leading effective demonstration lessons, co-teaching, observations, and feedback sessions; and
- Facilitate professional learning communities in analyzing data, designing professional learning, and evaluating the impact on student performance.

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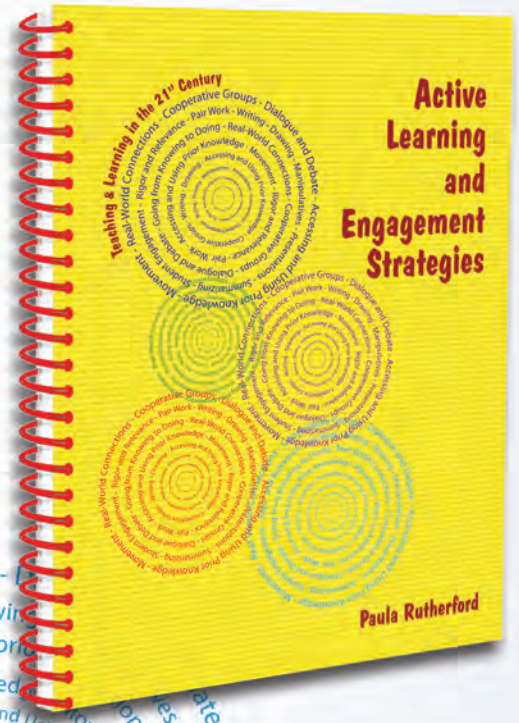

Build repertoires to engage more students more of the time

This new release from Just ASK features over 60 ways to ensure that students are interacting with the concepts, processes, and information in the **Common Core State Standards** in ways that promote rigor, relevance, and retention. Early reviews include:

- "Thank you for another concise, practical, easy-to-use resource that enhances quality instruction!"
- "Nicely organized. I appreciate the charts: 'If you want to.....'"
- "This book will be valuable for modeling the types of strategies my teacher candidates should be using in their classrooms."
- "Excellent ideas and information!"

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