

## **INVESTMENTS IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING MUST CHANGE:**

The goals are ambitious, the stakes are high — and resources are the key.

*By Joellen Killion and Stephanie Hirsh*

Traditional professional development is inadequate to meet the changes demanded by Common Core. For professional learning to build educator effectiveness and increase results for students, those leading, offering, or facilitating it must be clear on the outcomes of professional learning, have a long-term plan for supporting implementation of new learning, and the committed resources the plan demands. A list of recommended investments in professional learning points the way.

## **TOTAL IMMERSION:**

North Carolina district plunges into Common Core with a systemwide learning plan.

*By Valerie von Frank*

Charlotte-Mecklenburg (N.C.) Schools began to address the switch to the Common Core two years ago by introducing the standards to the school board and to parents. Since then, the district has created an internal website for teachers to share performance tasks and implemented systemwide, school-based professional learning that has put the standards into practice and tested students on them. Through the process, teachers learned how to unpack the standards, design lessons aligned to the standards, analyze student work, and complete performance tasks for their grade level.

## **TEACHERS CONNECT WITH TECHNOLOGY:**

Online tools build new pathways to collaboration.

*By Vicki L. Phillips and Lynn Olson*

Teachers have expressed a strong desire for Common Core-aligned resources and support. To provide this, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation created the Literacy Design Collaborative and the Mathematics Design Collaborative, through which groups of teachers, curriculum experts, and other educators work together to create high-quality, useful lessons and research-based instructional tools incorporating the Common Core State Standards.

## **LITERACY GETS A MAKEOVER:**

Engaged learning boosts student achievement at Michigan high school.

*By Richard E. Wood and Helen L. Burz*

E.A. Johnson High School in Mt. Morris, Mich., was in the bottom 5% of schools in Michigan, the principal had been replaced, and the school had just received a grant to improve student achievement. However, no one could articulate the teaching actions necessary to improve academic performance in a systematic manner. The staff was willing to make the changes necessary for success but needed more than a book study. External consultants helped them to clarify the school's vision for success and devise a professional learning plan. By focusing on effective literacy practices, the school made dramatic gains in student performance and reading assessment.

## **BUILDING COMMON KNOWLEDGE:**

What teachers need, and how districts can help.

*By Garth McKinney*

Over the last three years, teachers in a New Hampshire district have collaborated to unpack standards, determine power standards, design essential questions and big ideas, and collaboratively design units that emphasize both prioritization and conformity without removing creativity. The district supported their work, investing in and providing time for professional learning. Along the way, teachers gained a shared understanding of the Common Core standards.

## **READING, WRITING, AND RUBRICS:**

Norming process guides teachers as they evaluate student work.

*By Libby Baker, Naomi Cooperman, and Barbara Storandt*

Well-designed and implemented assessments don't just verify success — they help achieve it. Common Core-aligned assessments are anticipated to go deeper than before. What does it take for teachers to make the most of these new tests? In addition to needing skills for developing more in-depth assessments, teachers must know how to take advantage of the data they provide. This calls for the ability to analyze students' more complex work, which requires a mental model of multiple levels of student performance ranging from well below to well above the standard. A writing program for middle school using a norming protocol offers important lessons for expanding teachers' assessment capabilities through professional learning.

**coming up**

in October 2013 *JSD*:

**MEASURING IMPACT**



**features**

**FLEX YOUR SCHOOL’S DATA MUSCLES:**

Leadership strategies strengthen data’s impact.

*By Jennifer Unger*

What is keeping educators from moving districts and schools to high-performing data cultures? What vital role does leadership play? The author worked with school and district leaders and facilitators from TERC’s Using Data initiative to find the answers to these questions. Their research identified characteristics of high-performing data cultures in four categories: data use, collaboration, equity, and research and best practice. From this, they developed a plan to help leaders create and hold onto a big-picture vision for high-performing data cultures.

**15 MINUTES TO A TRANSFORMED LESSON:**

A conversation focused on content clarifies teaching objectives.

*By Jon Saphier*

Guidelines for conferences before an observation almost always call for the teacher to start with a statement of the objective. But it’s usually a very short cycle of question, answer, end of transaction. Then the conference moves on to assessments, student activities, grouping, and concerns about particular students. An alternative approach is a 10- to 15-minute content planning conference that analyzes the content to be taught for the relationship of the ideas, their hierarchy, sequence, the knowledge required to do the tasks assigned, and the most important and worthwhile takeaways for students.

**10 GOOD WAYS TO ENSURE BAD PROFESSIONAL LEARNING.**

*By Laura R. Thomas*

Based on her 20-plus years of experience, an external coach takes a tongue-in-cheek look at how to spend professional development time and money.

**INDEX OF ADVERTISERS**

ASCD ..... 13  
 Corwin Press..... inside back cover, 21  
 Generation Ready..... 33  
 Just ASK Publications & Professional Development..... outside back cover  
 Marzano Research Lab..... 15  
 School Improvement Network..... 1  
 Solution Tree..... inside front cover, 19

**columns**

**Collaborative culture:**

Perfectionism limits our chances to risk, learn, grow, and succeed.

*By Susan Scott and Deli Moussavi-Bock*

Our success, individually and collectively, comes down to a willingness to practice and persist, occasionally look foolish, and push forward regardless.

**From the director:**

Create learning that unlocks the potential of Common Core standards.

*By Stephanie Hirsh*

Open the classroom doors, design professional learning that engages, identify systemwide opportunities, and report on the results.

**Writing for JSD**

- Themes for the 2014 publication year are posted at [www.learningforward.org/publications/jsd/upcoming-themes](http://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](http://www.learningforward.org/publications/jsd/writers-guidelines).