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THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

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JSD
The Learning Forward Journal

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Diverse voices enrich Common Core preparation

No matter what kind of school or organization you are in, there's always someone whose first reaction to a new initiative is to say no. No, we can't, no, that's not a good idea, no, we don't have the resources. And there's always someone else with another new idea — or an answer to any objection. We certainly have that at Learning Forward among our staff.

Maybe those immediate reactions indicate who is an optimist and who is a pessimist. Or maybe they point to the change-o-philes and change-o-phobes. Ultimately, though, any effective organization listens to all viewpoints and develops its capacity to move toward a deeper discussion, raise serious questions, and investigate possibilities for moving forward to achieve agreed-upon outcomes.

In these discussions, high-functioning organizations learn from all sides of the discussion. Those who first raise their hands to volunteer for the next new initiative may bring not only enthusiasm but also creative strategies to get started. Those who had immediate objections may also know what it takes for long-term success. The diversity of viewpoints adds up to a complete implementation plan to move an initiative forward.

In this issue of *JSD*, we ask if you're ready for the Common Core standards — a very big new initiative. The fact is, ready or not, here they come. As Learning Forward Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh writes on p. 72, schools and systems do have some time this year to build capacity, bolster content knowledge, and overhaul instructional skills. Another year isn't a lot of time, though, and we hope the authors in this issue will help you undertake your own preparations. In professional learning for college- and career-ready standards, the needs range from the very specific — teachers digging into a specific mathematics challenge — to the systemic — how districts logically and meaningfully integrate Common Core standards, assessments, and teacher evaluation systems.

As always, the Standards for Professional Learning underlie the professional learning outlined in any issue of *JSD*, and as Joellen Killion and Stephanie Hirsh describe on p. 10, traditional professional development will not be up to the task for Common Core implementation. Their argument for resource investment in professional learning has a humorous counterpoint in Laura Thomas's look at how not to spend time and money effectively on p. 60.

On p. 34, Vicki Phillips and Lynn Olson share online tools that help educators develop and adapt research-based instructional tools. You'll also learn from practitioners doing the difficult work of unpacking content standards and building meaningful

adult and student learning at the school and system levels. For example, Valerie von Frank showcases how district leaders in Charlotte-Mecklenburg (N.C.) address challenges systemically and support educators at the school level. Garth McKinney, a teacher in New Hampshire, shares what he and his colleagues learned and what support helped them.

The issue draws upon what Learning Forward and its partners have learned through the initiative Transforming Professional Learning to Prepare College- and Career-Ready Students: Implementing the Common Core. You'll learn more about that project throughout the issue and have an opportunity to sample a range of tools from the many workbooks and briefs created to help schools and school systems develop comprehensive professional learning systems to implement rigorous content standards. We are grateful for support from Sandler Foundation, MetLife Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. ■

•

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

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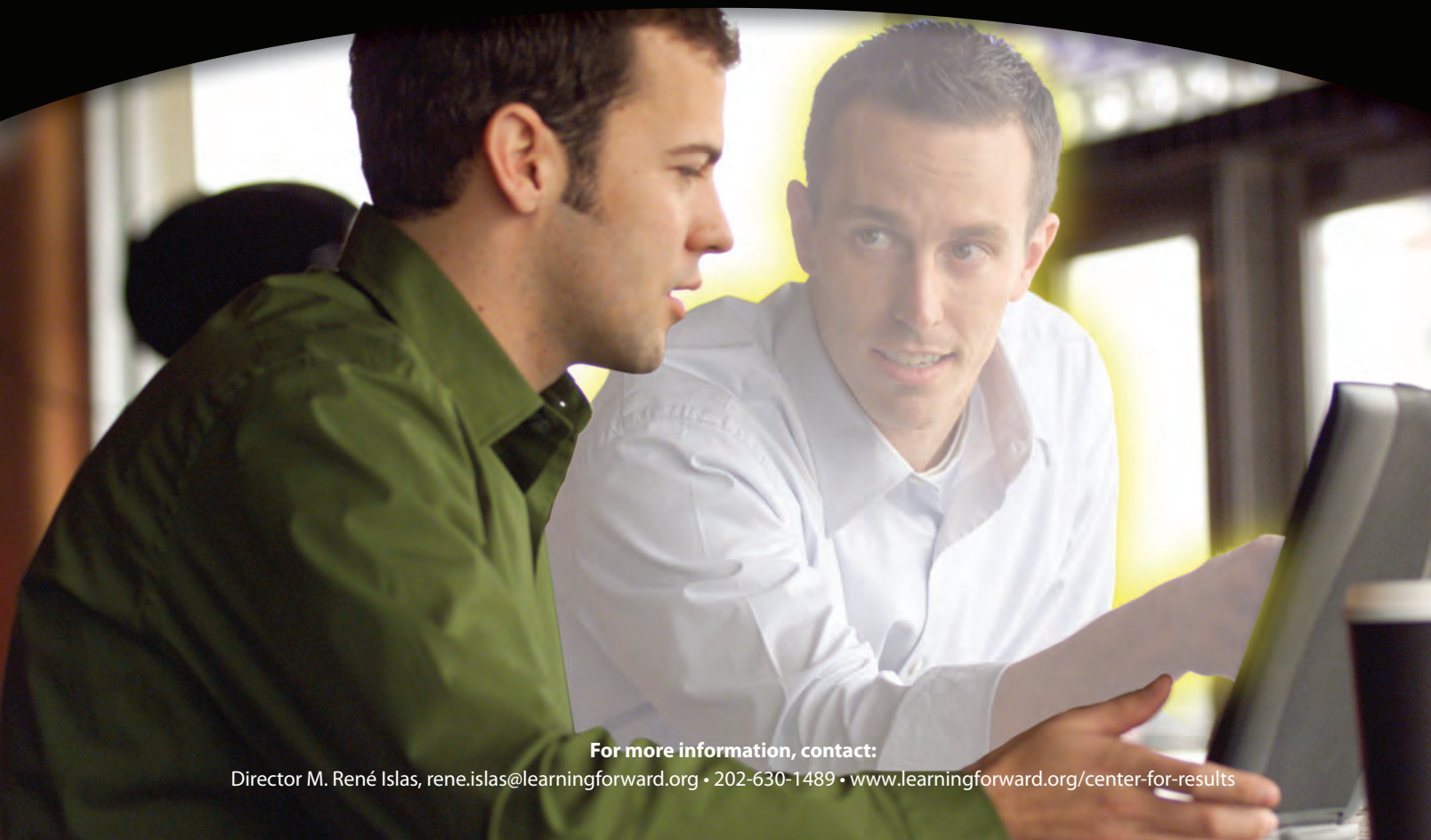

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essentials

SMARTER SPENDING
A New Vision for Teacher Professional Growth & Support: Six Steps to a More Powerful School System Strategy
Education Resource Strategies, June 2013

With funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Education Resource Strategies combined research, past experience with urban districts, and analysis of three different school systems — Duval County, Fla.; Washington, D.C.; and charter network Achievement First — to identify six steps school system leaders can take to rethink their approach to teacher professional development. This includes ideas on how to shift resources from outdated models to promising practices without adding expensive new programs. Accompanying the report is a set of tools, including a self-assessment checklist, budget-focused worksheets, and case studies, to help districts assess their use of professional development dollars and consider ways to allocate them more effectively.
www.erstrategies.org/library/a_new_vision_for_pgs

MEASURING STUDENT SKILLS
Criteria for Higher-Quality Assessment
Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, June 2013

Based on the changing demands of today's workforce, advances in other nations, and original analysis, this report provides a set of criteria for high-quality student assessments. Assessment developers, policymakers, and educators can use the criteria to create and adopt assessments that promote deeper learning of 21st-century skills that students need to succeed in today's knowledge-based economy. The five criteria include: assessment of higher-order thinking skills; high-fidelity assessment; international benchmarking; instructionally sensitive assessments; and assessments that are valid, reliable, and fair.
http://edpolicy.stanford.edu/publications/pubs/847

BLENDED LEARNING BENEFITS
Improving Conditions & Careers: How Blended Learning Can Improve the Teaching Profession
Digital Learning Now!, May 2013

The authors assert that blended learning can create more and better opportunities for teacher collaboration, enable differentiated staffing, and boost meaningful professional development. The report explains how shifts to online and blended learning expand career options for teachers and outlines three ways in which digital learning creates these opportunities. The last section of the report covers policy enablers for blended learning, including funding, evaluation, pay/career options, operations, timing and scalability, and performance incentives.
www.digitallearningnow.com/dln-smart-series

ENGAGING TEACHERS
Beyond Buy-In: Partnering with Practitioners to Build a Professional Growth and Accountability System for Denver's Educators
Aspen Institute, June 2013

LEAP, which stands for Leading Effective Academic Practice, is Denver Public Schools' new system for developing and evaluating effective teaching. Instead of designing the program in the central office first and then encouraging educators to buy into the new system, the district engaged teachers and principals in every step of the program's design, development, and rollout. Since then, the district has used a variety of strategies to incorporate educators' experiences and ideas into the program's ongoing development. *Beyond Buy-In* investigates how Denver's approach unfolded and how it can inform the work of system leaders nationwide.
www.aspendrl.org/portal/browse/DocumentDetail?documentId=1761&download

ONLINE VS. FACE-TO-FACE

Comparing the Impact of Online and Face-to-Face Professional Development in the Context of Curriculum Implementation

Journal of Teacher Education, July 2013

Online teacher professional development has the same effect on student learning and teacher behavior as more traditional face-to-face models, according to a study published by the *Journal of Teacher Education*. In an *Education Week* blog, Benjamin Herold reports that the study compared the experiences of teachers charged with implementing a new high school environmental science curriculum. One group participated in 48 hours of face-to-face workshops over six days, while their counterparts worked at their own pace through an online workshop covering the same content. In both groups, researchers found, "Teachers reported increased confidence with new curriculum materials, enacted those materials consistently with curriculum designers' intent, and their students learned from curriculum successfully and in equal amounts."

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/DigitalEducation/2013/06/no_difference_between_online_a.html

http://jte.sagepub.com

DIGITAL TOOLS

From Chalkboard to Tablets: The Digital Conversion of the K-12 Classroom

Speak Up, April 2013

Teachers and principals are becoming increasingly comfortable using online tools to hone their professional skills and are turning to options from social networking to web-based classes to do so, according to a study from Project Tomorrow. The survey found that the number of principals who said they support professional growth through some form of social networking more than tripled, from 8% in 2008 to 25% today. The portion of teachers who reported using social networking tools also jumped from 22% to 39% during that time.

www.tomorrow.org/speakup/SU12_DigitalConversion_EducatorsReport.html

IMPROVING MATH SCORES

Collective Pedagogical Teacher Culture and Mathematics Achievement: Differences by Race, Ethnicity, and Socioeconomic Status

Sociology of Education, April 2013

Many elementary students' math performance improves when their teachers collaborate, work in professional learning communities, or do both, yet most students don't spend all of their elementary school years in these settings, according to a study by UNC Charlotte researchers. The research shows that some schools have developed strong professional communities but have not fostered an environment where teachers are constantly working together to plan lessons and discuss student needs. Other schools have collaborative planning and teaching but teachers do not feel that they are part of a professional community. Few schools have effectively developed both. Study findings suggest that school leaders have the power to enhance math test scores and reduce gaps in scores across groups of students by encouraging community and professional teamwork, the authors said.

http://soe.sagepub.com/content/86/2/174

JSD STAFF

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HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

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Put the partner in 'partnership'

Third-party providers help school systems meet their goals of providing high-quality education to every student. As external providers, they offer the services, products, and goods that systems are unable to provide, or that they need to function.

Meet the Promise of Content Standards: The Role of Third-Party Providers (Killion, 2013) explores how district and state leaders can engage with third-party providers as partners. In particular, the brief describes how educators and developers can work together to find or create resources aimed at educating every student to meet rigorous content standards and supporting every educator to achieve high performance through continuous professional learning.

Potential partners should carefully consider the questions in the table at right to guide themselves in developing a productive partnership.

Reference

Killion, J. (2013). *Meet the promise of content standards: The role of third-party providers.* Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

1	How will this partnership add value to our existing goals and planned strategies?
2	What benefits, real or intangible, will each partner realize?
3	What are the costs — real, intangible, or possible — of the partnership?
4	What are the expectations and requirements for each partner with specifics about a timeline for delivering?
5	What procedures or protocols will be used if one partner wants to alter any aspect of the partnership plan or terminate the relationship?

Adapted from **Killion, J. (2011).** The perfect partnership. *JSD, 32*(1), pp. 11-15.

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

If you're interested in …	Start with the article on page …
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• TECHNOLOGY solutions	34
• LITERACY and teacher practice	10, 34, 38, 56
• ASSESSMENT	10, 38, 46, 50
• INVESTING in professional learning	10, 60

Tweeted by @LearningForward

Curious to hear: What have been some great strategies for helping educators — and yourself — prepare to implement Common Core?

@kimhonnick says:

Developing units of study and curriculum maps. Clarity around what and how we are teaching.

6	Which decisions related to the partnership will both partners make together? Which ones may partners make independently?
7	What is the communication process? Who will speak for the partners?
8	How will disagreements be handled?
9	Who will be responsible for managing or supervising the partnership?
10	What criteria will be used to measure success? What benchmarks?

DUNCAN GIVES STATES MORE TIME FOR EVALUATIONS

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan will give states a reprieve from certain aspects of teacher evaluations' consequences and the new wave of testing tied to the Common Core.

In a letter addressed to chief state school officers, Duncan announced extensions for the implementation of teacher and leader evaluation and support systems.

Photo by THE BROAD PRIZE FOR URBAN EDUCATION
Arne Duncan

"Given the move to college- and career-ready standards, the dramatic changes in curricula that teachers and principals are now starting to teach, and the transition to new assessments aligned to those standards, the department will consider, on a state-by-state basis, allowing states up to one additional year before using their new evaluation systems to inform personnel determinations. To be specific, states that request and are given this flexibility may delay any personnel consequences, tied in part to the use of student growth data, until no later than 2016-2017," the letter states.

- States interested in the extension may apply at **www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/esea-flexibility/index.html.**

Double-testing waiver: Duncan also announced a one-year waiver on double-testing. "We want to support states that would like to avoid double-testing students, which as you know often happens during the shift to a new test. Therefore, we would consider requests from states for a one-year waiver, to allow schools participating in these field tests to administer only one assessment in 2013-2014 to any individual student — either the current statewide assessment or the field test," the letter states.

- Details about the Title I waiver process are available at **www.ed.gov/titlei-waiver.**
- Read the full letter at **www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/130618.html.**

THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN PUTTING STANDARDS TO WORK

Among the many facets of implementing Common Core standards is the role of the principal. *Meet the Promise of Content Standards: The Principal* (Killion, 2012) outlines key actions of the principal and the district in supporting effective leadership practices.

Recommendations for action for the principal include:

- Collaborate with staff, students, and members of the school community to establish a vision of academic success.
- Participate in collaborative learning teams within and beyond the school focused on implementing Common Core standards.
- Access, analyze, and share information and resources about Common Core standards and instructional transformation.
- Develop the staff's understanding about change and change management.
- Visit classrooms, co-teach, or teach lessons to deepen understanding about the standards and instructional changes.
- Coordinate instructional resource staff within the school to focus on ensuring high levels of learning for all students.
- Celebrate successes, both large and small.

Reference

Killion, J. (2012). *Meet the promise of content standards: The principal.* Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

Learn more in the full brief at **www.learningforward.org/docs/commoncore/meetpromiseprincipal.pdf.**

Resources for professional learning include staff, time, funding, technology, and materials.

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

Nearly every conversation about the Common Core includes the topic of professional learning. National consensus of policymakers and educators acknowledges the tremendous need for it. The standards require more of students and educators alike.

Fundamental to the success of the core standards are educators knowing what the standards call for in terms of student learning, how to design learning experiences for students to meet the expectations, how to transform their existing classrooms and schools to achieve the standards, and how to access classroom resources that support personalizing instruction to meet the unique learning needs of each student. Educators welcome the standards and are eager to undertake significant effort to prepare all students for college and careers.

The work ahead requires a long-term commitment to intensive professional learning for all educators and innovative, rich, and flexible classroom instructional resources that fill the gaps in learning for many of America's students. To undertake the efforts necessary so that every student leaves high school ready for college and careers, schools, districts, states, regional and national education agencies, and education vendors need to make thoughtful and deliberate decisions regarding resources, particularly resources for professional learning.

Inequitable and inconsistent implementation of standards will persist if insufficient resources are available for educators, particularly teachers and their principals, to engage in the requisite preparation, professional learning, and extended support to make the transitions in their classrooms and schools called for by the new standards.

NEW APPROACH NEEDED

Traditional professional development is inadequate to meet the curricular, assessment, instructional, and leadership changes the new standards demand. Over a decade ago, the introduction of standards-based education held great promise. Today, more schools than ever fall short of meeting Adequate Yearly Progress.

In recent years with shrinking budgets, report Archibald, Coggshall, Croft, and Goe (2011), schools, districts, and states have cut resources for professional learning and the positions that support it "because of the perception that doing so does not compromise the basic operation of the school: teaching and learning. However, if the teaching in some classrooms is not at a level that allows students to achieve at least one year of growth, this perception is false, and resources need to be reallocated accordingly so that they are directly linked to improving teaching and learning" (p. 10). The decline in the past five years in the percentage of schools meeting Adequate Yearly Progress provides evidence that more must be done to improve student learning (Usher, 2011).

Adapted from the brief *Meet the Promise of Content Standards: Investing in Professional Learning*, this article draws on the work of Learning Forward's initiative, Transforming Professional Learning to Prepare College- and Career-Ready Students: Implementing the Common Core. This multidimensional initiative is focused on developing a comprehensive system of professional learning that spans the distance from the statehouse to the classroom. The project will reform policy and practice and apply innovative technology solutions to support and enhance professional learning. 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.

This work is supported by Sandler Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and MetLife Foundation.

Learn more at **www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core.**

- Recommended investments, p. 12
- Transforming Professional Learning resources, p. 16
- Tools from *Establishing Time for Professional Learning,* pp. 22-28

RECOMMENDED INVESTMENTS IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Investment	Purpose
10 days embedded within educators' work year and/or expanding educators' work year.	*To extend individual, team, schoolwide, and districtwide professional learning, teachers:* • Participate in university courses; • Enroll in expert- and peer-facilitated workshops; • Engage in blended, face-to-face, and online courses; • Attend local, state, or national conferences; and • Interact virtually or in person with researchers and other experts.
Adjust school-day schedules to provide three to four hours weekly for collaboration among teachers, between teachers and their principals, and among principals.	*To provide daily time for educators to transfer learning into practice, develop shared expertise, and refine practice through continuous improvement by:* • Studying content standards and curriculum to plan units and lessons of curriculum, assessment, and instruction; • Analyzing student learning progressions to identify and design interventions; • Solving problems related to student learning; • Calibrating student performance expectations; • Supporting peer professional growth; and • Reflecting on and assessing practice.
Provide technology infrastructure and innovative programs and resources to increase accessibility, efficiency, and adaptability of professional learning.	• To provide access to just-in-time learning, models of effective practices, simulations of classrooms and schools, tools for knowledge management, analysis of practice, and presentation of learning; • To connect educators with local and global networks of experts and peers to solve problems, seek information and support, and give and receive constructive feedback; and • To make educators' practice public in networking environments.
Provide differentiated staffing and compensation to support coaches, mentors, and teacher and principal leaders.	• To tap the expertise of educators within the school and school system through which master teachers and principals provide mentoring, coaching, and facilitated learning to individuals, teams, and school faculty to adapt and implement learning; • To increase the accuracy and frequency of use of the practices; and • To increase their collective expertise.
Increase funding for professional learning expert consultants, technical assistance, conference registrations, program fees, print or electronic professional books and journals, memberships to professional associations, etc.	• To maintain professional libraries with resources linked to national, state, district, and school goals; • To provide registrations for local, state, and national conferences to acquire cutting-edge research and practices; and • To access technical assistance from experts with new perspectives and research- and evidence-based practices to support goal attainment and address identified gaps, needs, or problems.

The urgency is high for implementation of the new standards, yet resorting to comfortable and familiar approaches to professional learning such as short-term awareness-building information sessions on what the new standards are and how they compare to previous ones will fall short of the intense, practical, content-focused professional learning needed to realize the promise of all students college- and career- ready at the end of high school.

Effective professional learning — that which leads to changes in educator practice and student learning — is a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness by extending their content knowledge, instructional and leadership practices, and understanding of how students learn. It combines educators learning from experts as well as with colleagues to apply their learning directly to their classrooms and schools.

COMMIT TO RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011) define the critical attributes of effective professional learning that emerge from research and evidence-based practice. Among the seven is one on resources.

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Resources for professional learning include staff, time, funding, technology, and materials. Professional learning staff include coaches, instructional facilitators, curriculum leaders, program leaders and managers who oversee professional learning, and principal time devoted to leading learning of their staff.

Time includes the school day and school year schedules that provide concentrated and ongoing time for educator learning and collaboration. Funding supports registrations for conferences, programs, and courses; professional journals and books; and programs and services that extend the local expertise of school and district staff.

Technology includes the connectivity, programs, resources, maintenance, and support for personalized, continuous, and differentiated learning needs. Materials include sample instructional and leadership tools, professional journals, books, sample lessons, and other print or electronic resources to facilitate implementation of Common Core.

For professional learning to build educator effectiveness and increase results for students, those leading, offering, or facilitating it, including schools, school systems, state departments of education, institutes of higher education, or third-party providers, 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.

There is no way around it. To achieve the vision of Common Core standards, the nation and each state need to not only change their approach to professional learning, but also invest more in it.

In a recent analysis of the costs associated with implementation of Common Core State Standards, Murphy & Regenstein (2012) analyzed three major cost areas associated with the new standards: instructional materials, assessment, and professional learning. Their analysis, as well as that of others, makes it clear that success with Common Core requires investments in professional learning.

In examining three different scenarios to determine costs of professional learning, the business-as-usual approach includes in-person training and delivery and is the most costly of the three. The other two approaches to professional learning, which they call "bare bones" and "balanced implementation," include online and blended professional learning.

Murphy & Regenstein propose that by repurposing existing resources and increasing their efficiency and effectiveness, it is possible to meet the implementation cost demands of the new standards with reasonable, not extraordinary, additional investments.

MAKE SMART INVESTMENTS

Investment decisions are never easy. Even when working with a trusted financial consultant or skillful investment advisor, those making decisions face ever-expanding and attractive options, impending risk, and few certainties.

The same is true when investing in professional learning, particularly to support a high-stakes initiative such as implementing Common Core State Standards. Individuals, schools, districts, states, and other education agencies recognize that how they invest resources for professional learning influences the returns they are likely to gain.

In too many situations, decisions about how to invest professional learning resources have had little significance. The reasons vary. First, the percentage of overall budgets dedicated to professional learning was typically less than 2%. Second, little accountability for the investments existed. Even today, many districts and schools have inadequate means for tracking expenditures in professional learning. Third, the urgency and scope of the change force decision makers to resort to what is familiar, even if it has been unsuccessful.

To achieve the results promised in Common Core standards, states and district and school leaders must make smart and new investments in the capacity of educators. Successful implementation of Common Core standards that leads to every student being college- and career-ready requires a renewed commitment and focus from all policy and decision makers, elected, employed, or engaged within school communities.

The recommendations in the table on p. 12 describe investments schools, districts, states, and other education agencies need to make in professional learning. The recommendations are based on an evidence-based adequacy model developed by Odden, Goetz, and Picus (2008).

Their model identifies additional resources to support professional learning as well as realignment and repurposing of existing resources. "Given the importance of teacher quality to student learning and the link between teacher quality and professional development," stress Archibald, Coggshall, Croft, and Goe (2011), "the greater investment is likely to lead to greater levels of student learning."

The recommendations are ambitious, yet they are no less ambitious than the intended outcomes of the Common Core standards. While the list of recommendations focuses on what teachers need, the same list can be used to identify the professional learning needs of principals, teacher leaders, coaches, and central office staff.

Teachers and principals need considerable opportunities to develop deep content-specific knowledge, expand content-specific pedagogy, examine how students learn, and apply new learning with extended support and constructive feedback. Principals need to expand their capacity to serve as instructional leaders and support teacher and student learning. To meet these expectations, schools, districts, states, and other education agencies must make the investments outlined on p. 12.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND EQUITY

Student needs vary from school to school and district to

Continued on p. 17

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RESOURCES TO IMPLEMENT COMMON CORE AND ASSESSMENTS

Leaders working to implement Common Core State Standards and new assessments can use these lessons and tools from a multistate demonstration project led by Learning Forward with support from Sandler Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and MetLife Foundation.

Learning Forward, working with the Council of Chief State School Officers, National Governors' Association, National Association of State Boards of Education, and American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, designed these resources to improve professional learning policy and practice across the school system.

To download these resources, visit **www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core.**

Meet the Promise of Content Standards: Professional Learning Required

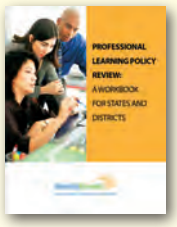
Explain the research, rationale, and role of professional learning in implementing new standards and assessments, and describe what professional learning looks like in practice.

www.learningforward.org/docs/pdf/read-the-brief-%28pdf%29.pdf

Comprehensive Professional Learning System: A Workbook for States and Districts

Design a comprehensive professional learning system that supports educator effectiveness and increased student achievement.

www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/comprehensive-professional-learning-system.pdf



Professional Learning Policy Review: A Workbook for States and Districts

Conduct an analysis of existing policies related to professional learning.

www.learningforward.org/docs/commoncore/professionallearningpolicyreview.pdf

Meet the Promise of Content Standards: Investing in Professional Learning

Understand how to invest time, funding, technology, materials, and staff in professional learning.

www.learningforward.org/docs/pdf/meetpromiseinvesting.pdf

Professional Learning Initiative Analysis: A Workbook for States and Districts

Conduct an inventory, review, and analysis of existing practices and investments in professional learning to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/professional-learning-initiative-analysis.pdf

Web Resources for Implementing Common Core Standards

Locate resources to support understanding and implementation of Common Core standards.

www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core

Meet the Promise of Content Standards: The Role of Comprehensive Induction

Improve mentoring and induction to develop capacity of novice teachers to share collective responsibility with their peers to increase student achievement.

www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/the-role-of-comprehensive-induction.pdf

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Meet the Promise of Content Standards: The Role of Third-Party Providers

Strengthen skills of administrators and leaders to develop productive relationships with third-party professional learning service providers in the state.

www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/the-role-of-third-party-providers.pdf

Meet the Promise of Content Standards: The Role of Technology for Teacher and Student Learning

Understand how teachers use technology to implement Common Core, increase their instructional effectiveness, and support student learning.

www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/the-role-of-technology-for-teacher-and-student-learning.pdf

Meet the Promise of Content Standards: Tapping Technology for Professional Learning

Guide the selection and use of technology within a system of professional learning. Access relevant content, refine instruction, and monitor continuous progress.

www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/tpltappingtechnology.pdf

Meet the Promise of Content Standards: The Principal

Guide principals in implementing Common Core standards by ensuring they have support in key areas of school leadership.

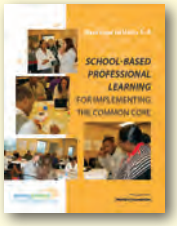
www.learningforward.org/docs/commoncore/meetpromiseprincipal.pdf

Establishing Time for Professional Learning

Redesign the school-day schedule to provide time for professional learning necessary to implement Common Core standards and assessments.

www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/establishing-time-for-professional-learning.pdf

School-Based Professional Learning for Implementing the Common Core



Build capacity to lead effective collaborative professional learning to implement Common Core standards.

www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core/professional-learning-units

Guiding District Implementation of Common Core State Standards: Innovation Configuration Maps

Assess and guide district leaders in their core responsibilities to support deep implementation of Common Core standards and educator effectiveness systems.

www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/kyccss_icmaps.pdf

Continued from p. 14

district. Formulas for resource allocation too infrequently address the dramatically different circumstances, characteristics, and history of academic need that exist among schools.

In their analyses of resource allocations in districts, particularly large urban ones, Calvo and Miles report that they find "significant misalignments in how they allocate resources to schools. … [S]chools and students with similar needs receive different levels and types of resources that don't match their circumstances," (2010, p. 40) typically because resource distribution is based on identical staffing and budgeting formulas regardless of the school's needs. Principals, they report, are given limited flexibility in how to use resources to address their unique needs. "All too often, the result is a system that is unintentionally inequitable and inflexible and doesn't serve school needs" (p. 40).

To address inequity, Calvo and Miles recommend weighted funding as a way to address the challenges and to create "transparency, flexibility, equity, and the conditions necessary for schools to organize themselves effectively around the particular needs of their students and staff" (p. 40). In some cases, allowing for such flexibility requires changes in federal, state, and local policies and perceptions about resources and organizing resources around academic need rather than formulas. Bold actions such as funding by academic need demonstrate accountability and responsibility for investments in educator success.

POOLING RESOURCES

Despite the growing need for support, resources are limited. In many cases, states, districts, and schools operate as independent entities in relationship to resources, especially those for professional learning. Collaborating on resource use may increase access to what is needed to support implementation of standards (Education First Consulting & Grantmakers for Education, 2011).

Pooling resources through purchasing cooperatives, shared investments, and joint research and development, states, districts, and schools can exponentially increase their influence and purchasing power with vendors, developers, and researchers. The common standards make pooling more viable than before. Besides combining resources for professional learning, states, districts, and schools might consider sharing the costs of curricula, formative assessments, instructional resources, and technology to support implementation of Common Core.

TAKING ACTION

Federal, state, district, and school leaders can advance the potential of Common Core State Standards through smart investments in professional learning. The following list of recommendations identifies bold actions needed to ensure educator learning.

Federal actions

- Establish a new program to support professional learning for Common Core standards and new assessments in those states and school systems demonstrating greatest student achievement needs.
- Require existing federal investments (Title I, Title II, Race to the Top, etc.) and federally funded agencies and programs (regional centers, comprehensive centers, National Science Foundation, Math and Science Partnerships, etc.) to support professional learning for implementation of Common Core standards.
- Use definition of and Standards for Professional Learning as the framework for ensuring all federal investments in professional learning are positioned for success.
- Invest in a nationwide technology infrastructure to provide equitable access to innovative, web-based resources and support for implementation of standards.
- Develop tools, processes, and resources to assist individuals, schools, school systems, and states to plan, monitor, and assess the quality and results of professional learning.
- Establish recognition programs to spotlight states and school systems that demonstrate effective professional learning for Common Core standards and new assessments.

State actions

- Adopt the definition of and Standards for Professional Learning to guide decisions about professional learning investments.
- Use rule-making authority to create a transparent, flexible, and equitable process for distributing resources, particularly time, staffing, and funding, to districts and schools with most significant student learning needs.
- Require state-supported agencies to focus their professional learning efforts on implementation of new standards and assessments.
- Repurpose existing resources for professional learning on the high-priority areas related to implementing college- and career-ready standards and new assessments.
- Provide guidance to districts and schools on how to review and make smart investments in resources and services from third-party providers to best meet their professional learning needs.
- Coordinate and fund the development of a statewide technology infrastructure and learning management systems to provide access to high-quality professional learning, especially personalized, just-in-time support for implementation of new standards.
- Coordinate efforts of state and community partners to assist districts in creating programs for extended student learning time and to provide time for teacher collaborative planning, study, and problem solving.
- Recognize and support differentiated teacher licenses to position teacher leaders with professional learning expertise to support consistent and full implementation of Common Core standards statewide.

District and school actions

- Adopt definition of and Standards for Professional Learning to guide decisions about professional learning and investments in it.
- Use rule-making authority and waivers to create a transparent, flexible, and equitable process for distributing resources, particularly time, staffing, and funding, to schools with most significant student learning needs.
- Design professional learning that leverages appropriate face-to-face, blended, and virtual learning and support to ensure that all educators develop the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practices necessary for deep implementation of Common Core standards.
- Use differentiated staffing, including teacher leaders, instructional coaches, principal coaches, and mentors, to ensure school- and classroom-based facilitation of individual, team and schoolwide professional learning.
- Collaborate with community partners to create programs for extended student learning and to provide time for teacher collaborative planning, study, and problem solving.
- Provide technology infrastructure and learning management systems to provide access to high-quality professional learning, especially personalized, just-in-time support for implementation of new standards.
- Realign professional learning resources to prioritize the implementation of new standards and assessments.

MAKING THE DECISION TO BUY

Vetting and purchasing the appropriate resources (materials, support, and technology) for professional learning requires careful deliberation, and, if done well, provides teachers with the support they need to be successful in shifting instructional

practice and school leaders with the expertise needed to support teacher and student learning.

The process that follows outlines the recommended steps for accomplishing the task of acquiring and using resources. When the stakeholders who will use the resources are engaged in all aspects of the process, it is more likely to result in sound decisions.

To make savvy decisions about resource investments for professional learning, education leaders and policymakers need to be deliberate and thoughtful with decisions before purchases. This is the first step in increasing the value of the investments. The second step is developing and using a solid plan for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating investments.

RECOMMENDED STEPS FOR ACQUIRING RESOURCES

1. Assess student learning needs in context of instructional and content shifts of Common Core State Standards.
2. Assess educator learning needs to meet student learning needs, asking such questions as:
   - What are educator needs related to addressing Common Core content meaningfully?
   - What are educator needs related to mastering new kinds of instruction?
   - Are educators prepared to differentiate new kinds of instruction to reach a range of student populations?
3. Use analysis of student and educator learning needs to identify professional learning content.
4. Establish criteria for reviewing, selecting, and purchasing professional learning resources, such as:
   - User-friendly.
   - Flexible content.
   - Platform interdependence.
   - Aligned with defined curriculum and standards.
   - Contextually appropriate.
   - Meets IDEA standards.
   - Adapts to differing educator learning needs.
   - Comprehensive, sustained, and intensive.
   - Includes opportunities for feedback and extended support.
5. Identify potential collaborators or shared users.
6. Invite collaborators.
7. Review and revise selection criteria with collaborators.
8. Invite vendors and/or identify or design products, services, and other investments.
9. Screen products, services, and other investments using established criteria.
10. Select or design products, services, and other investments.
11. Design implementation/use plan.
    - Staging use.
    - Professional learning to launch and support use.
12. Design evaluation for resource use and results.
13. Negotiate purchase/use agreements.
14. Implement resource investments.
15. Monitor and assess implementation of resources.
16. Evaluate implementation and results of resource use.

TAKE BOLD STEPS

States, districts, and schools must take bold steps to focus resources "on improving instructional practice and student learning" that will require "instructional revisioning and staff reallocation," according to Odden & Picus (2011). "The current fiscal shortcomings buffeting schools shouldn't be used as a rationale for failure to make continued progress toward higher levels of student achievement" (p. 48).

To improve resource investments in professional learning, states, districts, and schools need transparent and deliberate processes that require clear accounting as well as ongoing analysis of data about investment in, quality of, and results from professional learning (Killion & Hirsh, 2012, p. 16).

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Establishing time for professional learning

Time for collaborative learning is an essential resource for educators working to implement college- and career-ready standards. The pages that follow include tools from the workbook *Establishing Time for Professional Learning.* The tools support a complete process to help educators effectively find and use time.

The complete workbook is available online at **www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core.**

7 STEPS FOR ESTABLISHING TIME

THE PROCESS FOR ESTABLISHING TIME WITHIN THE SCHOOL DAY FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING INVOLVES SEVEN STEPS:

1	**Forming a time study team** addresses engaging representatives from various parts of the school or school system community to participate in the time study process and determining who will develop recommendations for the decision makers.
2	**Examining assumptions about time** describes processes for assessing current perceptions held about time for education. Understanding personal assumptions about time early in the process will provide fundamental information for members of the time study team as they engage in their work.
3	**Understanding existing time** includes strategies for conducting an analysis of how time is currently used to inform the work of the time study team. In some cases, repurposing existing time is the first way to increase time for collaborative professional learning.
4	**Studying time options** provides resources and guides the time study team as members examine models from other schools and school systems to inform their work.
5	**Forming and adopting recommendations** about time launches a public discussion about how to fulfill the need within the given parameters. After developing concrete recommendations, members of the time study team should decide how to vet them for consideration and modification before they make final recommendations.
6	**Establishing a plan to implement and evaluate** accepted recommendations is an essential part of the work. Ongoing monitoring and assessment can generate information about the efficiency and effectiveness of the time investment.
7	**Reviewing time use and results** provides ongoing data to make adjustments and improvements in the use of time to achieve the maximum benefits for both educators and students.

Source: Killion, J. (2013). *Establishing time for professional learning.* Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

EXPLORING ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT TIME

USE THE STATEMENTS BELOW AND ON P. 24 TO EXPLORE YOUR PERSONAL ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT TIME AND TIME FOR COLLABORATION AMONG EDUCATORS IN SCHOOLS.

Each row contains two statements that represent different perspectives on one aspect of time. Indicate which perspective more closely aligns with your personal view by placing an X in one of the five boxes.

For example, in row 1, if you agree more with the statement on the left, yet not fully with it, you might place an X in box b. If you do not have an opinion related to the statements in row 1, you might place your X in box c.

	One perspective about time	Range of agreement					Another perspective about time
		a	b	c	d	e	
1	Time is a fixed commodity that cannot be adapted.						Time is a resource to adapt to our needs.
2	Time constrains our efforts.						Time enhances our efforts.
3	Determining how time is allocated and used during the workday is an individual decision.						Determining how time is allocated and used within a school day is a collaborative decision.
4	Decision makers or policymakers outside the school determine the amount of time available for collaborative professional learning and work.						The amount of time available for professional learning is determined inside the school through a collaborative process that engages all stakeholders.

EXPLORING ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT TIME (continued)

One perspective about time		Range of agreement					Another perspective about time
		a	b	c	d	e	
5	Time controls us.						We control time.
6	Leaders in our school and district do not support teacher collaboration as a means of increasing teaching effectiveness and student achievement.						Leaders in our school and district support teacher collaboration as a means of increasing teaching effectiveness and student achievement.
7	Parents and community members believe that factors other than collaboration among teachers and ongoing professional learning lead to increased student achievement.						Parents and community members believe that collaboration among teachers and ongoing professional learning lead to increased student achievement.
8	The district expects educator professional learning to occur outside educators' workdays.						The district expects educator professional learning to occur routinely as a part of educators' workdays.
9	The more time allocated to student learning, the more they learn.						It is not the amount of time allocated that affects student learning, but rather how time is used.
10	Increasing time for collaborative professional learning among educators decreases the amount of time for student learning.						Increasing time for collaborative professional learning among educators can be accomplished without decreasing significantly the amount of time for student learning.

Source: Killion, J. (2013). *Establishing time for professional learning.* Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

POLICY PARAMETERS REGARDING TIME

USE THE QUESTIONS BELOW AND ON P. 26 TO GUIDE INITIAL INVESTIGATION ABOUT THE REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO THE USE OF TIME IN THE DISTRICT OR STATE.

POLICY REQUIREMENTS	
What requirements exist in state and district policy regarding the length of the school day?	
Week?	
Year?	
OTHER FACTORS	
What other factors influence the length of the school day and year?	
Special program requirements, etc.?	
Before- and after-school care?	
Student transportation?	

POLICY PARAMETERS REGARDING TIME (continued)

CURRENT COMPLIANCE	
How well does your current school day and calendar meet the requirements?	
WAIVERS	
Are waivers available within your district or state to requirements about the school day or year?	
What are the criteria for applying for waivers, if they are available?	
Does your school or district currently have a waiver for time for student learning?	

Source: Killion, J. (2013). *Establishing time for professional learning.* Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

ANALYSIS OF CURRENT TIME USAGE

USE THIS PROCESS TO GUIDE A STUDY OF CURRENT TIME USE WITHIN SCHOOLS.	
How much time in minutes do staff members have for planning?	
How much time in minutes are staff members expected to attend staff meetings per week/month?	
How many professional learning days are planned into the current school year?	
When do those days occur?	
Add the number of minutes available in professional learning days. Remember to subtract lunchtime.	

1	For one week, record uses of **planning** time in the time use log on p. 28.
2	As a team, graph how all members of the team or schoolwide used time collectively by adding the total amount of time used in each category across all members' logs.
3	Identify how much of the available time was spent in school-based team learning.
4	Refer to and complete the time use log. Identify how much of the total available time was invested in work related to **all areas** in the first column.
5	Use the graph and personal perceptions to consider the impact of various ways time is used by considering these questions: **a.** What is the difference between the amounts of time spent in individual work versus time spent in collaborative work? **b.** What kind of time usage is the most satisfying to you? **c.** What kind of time usage is the least satisfying to you? **d.** What type of time usage has the greatest impact on achievement of your students? **e.** What kind of time usage has the greatest impact on your practice as a teacher?
6	Identify the norms/agreements/expectations about time in the school.
7	Consider how to increase the kind of time usage that is most satisfying to you and that has the greatest impact on achievement of your students.

Source: Killion, J. (2013). *Establishing time for professional learning.* Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

TIME USE LOG

USE THE LOG TO IDENTIFY HOW NONINSTRUCTIONAL TIME IS SPENT ON VARIOUS TASKS AND INDICATE IF THAT TIME IS SPENT ALONE OR IN COLLABORATION WITH ONE OR MORE COLLEAGUES.

A = alone / C = collaboration with one or more colleagues

AREAS	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Total min.
	# min.	A/C	# min.	A/C	# min.	A/C	# min.	A/C	# min.	A/C	
Instructional planning (lesson design, curriculum development, materials and resource development, etc.)											
Assessment (analyzing student work, grading student work, designing assessments, data analysis, etc.)											
Professional learning (formal or informal learning that occurs during the workday)											
Management/clerical (attendance, nonacademic reports, business transactions, copying, getting supplies, etc.)											
School-focused work (committee work, etc.)											
District-focused work (committee work, etc.)											
Personal tasks (phone calls, errands, etc.)											
Other											
Total daily time											
Total alone											
Total collaborative											

Adapted from Killion, J. (2006). *Collaborative professional learning in school and beyond: A tool kit for New Jersey educators* (p. 117). Oxford, OH: New Jersey Department of Education & National Staff Development Council.

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TOTAL IMMERSION

NORTH CAROLINA DISTRICT PLUNGES INTO COMMON CORE WITH A SYSTEMWIDE LEARNING PLAN

By Valerie von Frank

A few decades ago, kindergarteners may have chanted "one, two, buckle my shoe" as the sum total of their counting skills. With Common Core State Standards, they learn not only to add one plus one, but they have to explain why one plus one equals two.

In Charlotte-Mecklenburg (N.C.) Schools, educators have leapt into the Common Core with both feet, creating an internal website for teachers to share performance tasks and implementing systemwide, school-based professional learning that has put the standards into practice and tested students on them in the 2012-13 school year.

"I came at this with excitement, not, 'Here's another initiative rolling out that we have to embrace,' " said Ann Clark, deputy superintendent of the district. "Memorizing that one plus one is two and explaining why one plus one is two are two very different things, and that to me is what is exciting about the Common Core.

"It's going to push our students at every grade level to think critically, to problem solve, to analyze, to articulate, and to write in ways that they've not been expected to before. As a career educator, that is very exciting to me."

ROLLING OUT THE STANDARDS

The district began to address the switch to the Common Core two years ago by introducing the standards to the school board and to parents in what Clark said parents have dubbed Common Core 101. The standards were broken into grade-level expectations first.

The district created a Common Core steering committee of zone superintendents, the deputy superintendent, curriculum specialists, a teacher in residence, principals from all levels and types of schools, and a staff member from the accountability division to create a professional development plan.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
Charlotte, N.C.

Number of schools: **159**
Enrollment: **141,171**
Staff: **9,180** certified teachers
Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	**32%**
Black:	**42%**
Hispanic:	**18%**
Asian/Pacific Islander:	**5%**
Native American:	**3%**
Other:	**0%**

Limited English proficient: **11%**
Languages spoken: **168** countries represented
Free/reduced lunch: **53.4%**
Contact: **Ann B. Clark**, deputy superintendent
Email: **a.clark@cms.k12.nc.us**

The learning was designed to be school-based, Clark said, because the district had in place professional learning communities that had been functioning for several years already. In addition, with more than 10,000 teachers, it was impractical to try to pull teachers together for large-scale sessions to introduce standards concepts as a whole. Even putting all kindergarten teachers in one room in a district building is not possible.


Ann Clark

Unpacking the standards at the school level made sense, she said, in learning teams where principals and instructional specialists would use learned strategies to dig deep into each new standard and explore how it would look in practice through performance tasks.

To build capacity in the initial year, district leaders met monthly with principals, assistant principals, literacy facilitators, and math facilitators. Two district curricular directors led the curricular instruction teams: the lead literacy person trained literacy facilitators, and the lead math person trained the math facilitators. The directors were trained in the Common Core by the Aspen Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based education and policy studies organization. Chief academic officers from large urban districts gather twice a year to work with the Aspen Institute on key issues of mutual interest, including the Common Core.

Then, in two-hour weekly teacher planning sessions with grade-level or subject-area teams at their schools, the school-based specialists offered feedback as teacher teams developed lesson and unit plans while thinking through the standards.

While each school is required to have professional learning communities, each has flexibility in its approach to how those look. Some meet for shorter periods twice a week; others meet once for a longer time. Some schools schedule common planning periods while others use student release time.

"Our whole strategy was built on the notion of building capacity for a team in each school to own the training process so it wasn't solely on the shoulders of each principal," Clark said. "So it was not just 'meet for professional development on the Common Core and let's hope it goes well,' but really infusing the thinking about these standards."

Over the summer, teachers in all content areas met under the guidance of a curriculum specialist to write the initial curriculum guides, and principals and assistant principals participated in a weeklong summer leadership conference.

The district planned a weeklong, voluntary teacher institute focused on either literacy or mathematics each summer. These are offered multiple times each summer, and teachers receive "flex" certificates in return that they can use for a day off during the school year in return as compensation. Typically, several hundred attend each session.

Meanwhile, throughout the school year, the district steering committee continues to meet for two hours each month to evaluate professional learning and assess gaps, Clark said.

"We always get feedback on our professional development," she said, "so the agenda changes from month to month. We might be preparing a presentation for the board, a series of trainings, a webinar. We might have gone to an Aspen Institute seminar and come back with new information we want to share. It's about working a plan and determining what the next steps need to be. This team is, as the name implies, navigating through this process."

A SHARED WEBSITE

The most significant piece of learning may be the internal shared website to which teachers upload performance tasks they have created linked to the Common Core standards. But first, teachers had to learn to "unpack" or deconstruct a standard to create the performance tasks they would teach.

In the first year, in 2011-12, the district focused on a process for unpacking one standard that would be new to all teachers: the first writing standard focused on argumentative writing at each level in kindergarten through 12th grade.

The standard was at once familiar and not since it involved writing but with a different approach than most were used to, said Becky Graf, the district's director of humanities, who oversees the database effort. The state had tested writing at just two grades, and many teachers hadn't worked on writing skills with students much at all. It seemed like a good fit.

"It gave us a chance to talk about the shifts in literacy," she said. "In their professional development, we were able to show them, 'Here are the kinds of things that the next generation assessments are going to be asking for.' Our state has done a lot more with constructed response, and everybody is used to filling in bubbles and figuring out (how to teach) test-taking skills that way. That wasn't going to give us the shift we needed."

Using the online data, curriculum specialists were able to see how teachers were scoring the performance tasks and the quality of the student work products, whether that was by school, a particular grade level, or a particular subject.

The teachers were given four objectives. They had to learn how to unpack the standard, how to design lessons aligned to the standard, how to analyze student work, and they had to complete performance tasks for their grade level. They were held accountable by submitting the performance tasks to a shared internal database.

The first year, rather than every teacher submitting a performance task, every professional learning community uploaded the task the team constructed, the rubric the team used to score the task, and three samples of student work: one that approached the standard, one that met the standard, and one that exceeded the standard. District leaders recognized that the work might not align with the standard and teachers might have missteps. But the process built on earlier work, Graf said.

"We'd already initiated a process where we were very focused on the quality of the student work product and we were raising that bar, so (the Common Core work) really synced nicely with the district effort," she said.

ENHANCING THE EFFORT

In 2012-13, the efforts expanded to every standard, and teacher teams began uploading performance tasks and student work products by grade level and course or content area in a new format that is searchable to any teacher within the district. Colleagues can see their peers' tasks, rubrics, and student work to know what others are doing. A drop-down menu allows the teacher to select under which standard to place the task. Teachers also can get the email address of the submitting teacher to contact for more information or handouts.

Becky Graf

"We gave initial professional development on what is a performance task and the design of a performance task," Graf said. "Now teachers can actually use the samples that they know teachers created, that they know their peers created, to better their own practice."

District-level teacher teams in every content area reviewed uploaded performance tasks and vetted them. In addition, some school leaders used sample online tasks for professional learning, asking teachers to use the tasks as examples for discussion and comparison in professional learning team meetings.

As teachers added to the overall performance tasks across the standards, the district worked to calibrate the initial Writing 1 standard that had been the first-year focus.

Using the online data, curriculum specialists were able to see how teachers were scoring the performance tasks and the quality of the student work products, whether that was by school, a particular grade level, or a particular subject.

"It provided a view of where the gaps are and helped us know where we needed to go next in our training," Graf said. "That's a big piece we used to plan the next phase of the work."

Graf said reviewing is as constant as change, and both she and Clark know the work will not cease.

"We have much work to continue to do," Clark said, "but certainly our strategy is working.

"The teachers are not in their individual classrooms trying to figure this out alone," she continued. "They're sitting in their professional learning communities and have a facilitator in the room with them, and there have been lots of supports put in place for them."

Graf said she expects the work in the online database to turn over rather than be archived as the quality improves and teachers continue to vet the tasks. Eventually, she said, the performance tasks will be screened and vetted, will have been reviewed by a curriculum committee, and will have experienced success in multiple classrooms in more than one building. Eventually, teachers may log in to the site and see an Amazon-style rating system that could help them determine which task might best suit their needs.

But for now, what has the database shown?

"One aha we have been grappling with is that teachers are used to frontloading so much," Graf said. "When they talk about the shift (to the Common Core), they talk about reading and approaching text, but the same thing applies to writing and problem solving. Teachers give all the steps and never lay the problem out and let the students grapple with it and come to their own solutions. We need to help teachers be OK in letting go and giving kids a more inquiry-based approach. They can't just frontload it and turn it all into factual recall. And that was happening in a lot of buildings. The kinds of tasks they submitted show a lot of structure."

Graf said the task samples tied to the Common Core created a shift in thinking, showing the gap between what teachers understand and the level of understanding needed to accomplish the goal. She said teachers looked at the database tasks and said their students would not be able to do the task — or they tried a task and were surprised that the children could do more than they expected.

"It's almost like we're doing at a district level what we want teachers doing at a classroom level," Graf said. "We did some teaching. We collected a lot of student work. We're analyzing the student work to make changes in our instruction at a district level to make changes — and that's what we're asking our teachers to do."

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TEACHERS CONNECT *with* TECHNOLOGY

ONLINE TOOLS BUILD NEW PATHWAYS TO COLLABORATION

By Vicki L. Phillips and Lynn Olson

The Common Core State Standards promise to raise expectations for all students by establishing consistent college- and career-ready learning goals across the country. The standards build on the best of the current state standards informed by the experiences of top-performing countries. Most importantly, they focus on what is most essential at each grade level, bringing coherence and focus, rather than asking students and teachers to learn less and less about more and more.

Implementation of the Common Core provides an opportunity for states and districts not only to raise expectations, but also to rethink how they support teachers with instructional materials and professional learning. The Common Core will require teachers to shift their instructional practice in significant ways. To build long-term understanding and ownership, training and support should take advantage of teachers' own expertise and the power of teacher-to-teacher networks.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NEEDS

Teachers have expressed a strong desire for Common Core-aligned resources and support. In a 2012 Scholastic survey of teachers, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, teachers indicated they need more professional support and development to implement these standards. About six in 10 teachers requested professional learning focused on the standards and how to teach them, along with new English and math curricula and learning tools (Scholastic & Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012).

Yet traditional approaches for supporting educators following the introduction of new content standards will

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likely prove inadequate. As Learning Forward noted in *Meet the Promise of Content Standards: Investing in Professional Learning*, "Resorting to comfortable and familiar approaches to professional learning such as short-term awareness-building information sessions on what the new standards are and how they compare to previous ones will fall short of the intense, practical, content-focused professional learning needed to realize the promise of all students college- and career-ready at the end of high school" (Killion & Hirsh, 2012). Effective professional learning encourages collaboration among teachers over a sustained period to tackle the challenge of Common Core implementation.

A NEW APPROACH

At the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, we believe teachers need to be involved as critical partners in developing tools and resources to support Common Core implementation. When working together, teachers draw on their shared trust, expertise, and experiences to improve instruction. And when this collaboration focuses on student work, it builds educators' capacity to address students' academic needs immediately.

State and district leaders can bring educators together to develop and adapt instructional materials aligned to the Common Core in a variety of settings — and the good news is they don't have to start from scratch.

The foundation supports two examples of this kind of collaboration: the Literacy Design Collaborative **(www.literacydesigncollaborative.org)** and the Mathematics Design Collaborative **(www.mygroupgenius.org/mathematics)**, 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. More than developing a free, online library of new lessons and units, these efforts are pioneering new pathways for how educators can work together to shift teacher practice.

For example, the Common Core State Standards recognize that, to succeed in college, students need to understand and write about nonfiction texts. But most high school science and social studies teachers, and even some English teachers, have little training in teaching reading and writing. In New York City, instructional experts from New Visions for Public Schools, a New York City-based nonprofit organization, are using the framework and tools developed by the Literacy Design Collaborative to help teachers across content areas embed standards-based literacy skills into their classrooms.

These skills include locating textual evidence, evaluating arguments, interpreting meaning, and synthesizing information from different sources. Teachers use templates aligned to the standards to develop their own curriculum modules that scaffold the writing process and enable teachers to assess student progress. These teachers are producing classroom-tested, Common Core-aligned modules that other teachers can adopt or adapt. And because all of the lessons are built off of a common set of templates, teachers are talking the same language, which makes sharing their work easier.

In mathematics, the standards ask teachers to weave together content knowledge and application. The Mathematics Design Collaborative addresses this by supporting teachers in enacting high-quality formative assessment through the use of lessons called classroom challenges. These two-day lessons help teachers understand where students are in their mastery of a topic, create learning experiences for students to develop rich understanding of a given topic, and give students opportunities to apply their learning in meaningful ways.

New Visions supports teachers in the math collaborative by facilitating grade-level team meetings to identify students' misunderstandings based on a preassessment. Teachers jointly design probing questions that will help address those misconceptions as students work collaboratively on challenging math tasks. Then teachers collectively review students' understandings once the task is completed to see if their instruction has been effective.

There is a buzz of enthusiasm in these schools as teachers embrace the work. Some say working with the collaboratives has been the best professional learning of their careers. Teachers report that they are covering fewer topics more deeply, that their expectations for student writing have increased, and that their students are more engaged and producing higher-quality work. Teachers also say that some of the extra time initially spent on these new instructional approaches is recouped later in the year because students can apply the skills learned to future lessons. Some teachers already are adapting these methods and performance tasks to the rest of their curriculum.

The collaboratives demonstrate that teachers are eager for meaningful opportunities to work together to create tools and resources that will improve student learning. And when teachers are engaged in developing instructional resources, they share them with each other, helping best practices spread faster than the common cold.

WHAT EDUCATION LEADERS CAN DO

The collaboratives are just one model for engaging educators in Common Core implementation. State and district leaders can bring educators together to develop and adapt instructional materials aligned to the Common Core in a variety of settings — and the good news is they don't have to start from scratch. Teachers can find tools from the literacy and math design collaboratives at ASCD's EduCore **(http://educore.ascd.org)**. In addition, organizations across the country are putting together collections of free, high-quality curriculum and instructional resources that can be adapted by local educators as part of a

sustained program of professional learning.

For example, LearnZillion **(http://learnzillion.com)** offers short video lessons developed by teachers that illustrate key concepts in mathematics and English language arts for students in grades 3-12. In 2012, Learn Zillion convened more than 100 teachers in Atlanta to create more than 2,000 lessons — with accompanying videos — aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Students can search the videos by content area, grade level, or topic to review material out of class, and teachers can access additional resources to plan lessons, engage parents, and monitor student progress.

Similarly, Better Lesson **(http://betterlesson.com)** provides free access to lesson plans, materials, and instructional resources created by successful teachers. Better Lesson was founded by a group of teachers from Boston and Atlanta who wanted to spread best practices to new and developing teachers. The organization is now working with high-performing mathematics and English language arts teachers to create Common Core-aligned courses and share strategies for effective instruction.

Technology allows teachers to access professional development resources when and how they want to, expanding the reach of summer workshops and professional learning days. Increasingly, innovative groups are tapping into the ability to provide tools and resources online. Student Achievement Partners **(www.achievethecore.org)** provides resources and professional development modules to help teachers understand the instructional shifts Common Core requires. The organization is working with the two national teachers unions to develop Common Core-aligned tools by teachers for teachers.

Teacher leaders who are part of the fellowship program at America Achieves **(http://commoncore.americaachieves.org)** have created lessons grounded in the Common Core, which other teachers can use or adapt, as well as videos of themselves teaching the lessons. The Teaching Channel **(www.teachingchannel.org)** also allows educators to search for lesson ideas that are linked to the Common Core and then watch videos of teachers giving those lessons in real classrooms. Instead of inventing new techniques out of whole cloth, the Teaching Channel helps connect teachers with tactics, strategies, and methods that have been shown to work.

REACHING TEACHERS

These resources can only be effective if teachers know about them. Too often, we hear from teachers that they are in great need of resources but don't know what is available. Some states are addressing this by creating dedicated websites with information and links to materials. For example, the Tennessee Department of Education launched TNCore **(http://tncore.org)**, which includes background on the standards and the instructional shifts they require, state-developed online training modules, and links to external resources.

District intranets and learning management systems also offer ways to connect teachers to high-quality online resources and to each other. Districts in Colorado, Illinois, and New York are now piloting new cloud-based services that connect content from a wide variety of publishers to information about student learning needs, giving teachers greater access to curriculum and assessment resources and the ability to personalize learning so that students get what they need, when they need it, in a format that works best for them.

THE POWER OF COLLABORATION

From online lessons to streaming video of master teachers in the classroom, technology can be a powerful tool to help teachers explore and share best practices to implement the Common Core. Yet technology is best positioned to support, not drive, effective Common Core implementation.

The most important ingredient is the opportunity for teachers to collaborate and reflect together. To get Common Core implementation right, school and district leaders must take the time to ensure teachers have adequate resources and support to collaborate on the enormous shifts in instruction they are being asked to make on behalf of students.

Standards alone won't teach students how to closely read great literature or choose the appropriate mathematical strategy to solve a problem. For that, there is no substitute for great teaching. With the right supports, teachers are poised to take ownership of how to best implement the Common Core in their classrooms and to explore the teaching and learning possibilities opened up by the new standards.

From online lessons to streaming video of master teachers in the classroom, technology can be a powerful tool to help teachers explore and share best practices to implement the Common Core. Yet technology is best positioned to support, not drive, effective Common Core implementation.

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LITERACY GETS *a* MAKEOVER

ENGAGED LEARNING BOOSTS STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AT MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL

By Richard E. Wood and Helen L. Burz

The high school 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. The staff read *Classroom Instruction That Works* (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001), everyone was in a professional learning community by department, the school and district administration were deeply committed to improvement, and yet no one could articulate the teaching actions necessary to improve academic performance in a systematic manner.

The school is E.A. Johnson High School in Mt. Morris, Mich., near Flint, where the city has felt deeply the impact of the area's economic decline. The student population is 72% free and reduced lunch.

The staff was willing to make the changes necessary for success but needed more than a book study. Many of the structures for professional learning were in place, such as opportunities for collegial dialogue, capacity building, and a focus on data, all conducted through department-based professional learning communities.

The staff needed to analyze, summarize, prioritize, and personalize the Common Core State Standards. They also needed to model, discuss, analyze, and implement research-based classroom instructional practices aligned to the Common Core.

These changes required scheduled monitoring and support. Finally, staff needed to assess student achievement, focused on proficiency in the Common Core, in a manner that provided feedback for further instructional decision making and improvement.

Photos by KITTY BLACK

At E.A. Johnson High School, the staff was willing to make the changes necessary for success but needed more than a book study.

E.A. Johnson High School
Mt. Morris, Mich.

Grades: **9-12**
Enrollment: **600**
Staff: **40**
Racial/ethnic mix*:

White:	**77%**
Black:	**20%**
Hispanic:	**7%**
Asian/Pacific Islander:	**<1%**
Native American:	**<1%**
Other:	**16%**

Limited English proficient: **<1%**
Languages spoken: **English, Punjab**
Free/reduced lunch: **72%**
Special education: **13%**
Contact: **Tricia Hill**, superintendent
Email: **thill@mtmorrisschools.org**
* Some students report more than one race/ethnicity.

CLARIFY THE VISION

As consultants, we saw the need to clarify the school's vision for success, the Common Core State Standards, and what the changes look like in very explicit terms.

During our first visit to the school, we conducted a walk-through with the principal and assistant principal, looking for indicators of effective instruction in two categories: getting ready to learn and strategies for learning.

The data we collected was discouraging. Many students had their heads down on their desks, there was no evidence of engaged learning or literacy strategies in use, and there was no evidence that students knew the learning outcome.

However, there was clear evidence that the responsibility for learning was with the teacher. The teachers were working harder than anyone else in the classroom. The staff was very committed but didn't know what to do differently to get a different result.

We created a plan for professional learning: All English language arts teachers would meet monthly and focus on the writing process, while all non-English language arts teachers, except mathematics teachers, would meet monthly to focus

SUMMARIZATION DATA

Department	*Percent of students by proficiency level*							
	Advanced		Proficient		Partially proficient		Basic	
	October 2011	May 2012	October 2011	May 2012	October 2011	May 2012	October 2011	May 2012
SOCIAL STUDIES main idea	8%	58%	26%	32%	25%	8%	41%	2%
SCIENCE main idea	3%	49%	9%	37%	29%	11%	59%	2%
NONCORE main idea	17%	60%	24%	33%	29%	5%	30%	2%
SOCIAL STUDIES supporting details	6%	51%	20%	29%	37%	15%	37%	5%
SCIENCE supporting details	31%	37%	17%	43%	35%	14%	17%	6%
NONCORE supporting details	7%	21%	24%	49%	31%	26%	38%	4%

on developing literacy skills in their classrooms.

From January to May 2011, professional learning focused on understanding and implementing the Common Core and effective literacy practices for learning. During 2011-12, the staff assessed the effectiveness of the strategies implemented. The English language arts department concentrated on implementing Common Core writing standards 1-3 (products) and 4, 5, and 6 (audience, purpose, and process), while the remaining teachers focused on implementing Common Core reading standards 1 (citing evidence from text), 2 (summarizing text), 4 (vocabulary in context), and 10 (reading and viewing a wide range of texts). We led the staff through a process to summarize and prioritize these reading standards.

By the end of the 2011 school year, we easily attained the 80% benchmark for implementation. It was rare to see a student's head down on a desk.

GETTING READY TO LEARN

We began our work by asking teachers to do three very simple things for a month and to report back the result.

1. Post a daily agenda with learning action words.
2. Post an essential question or learning target.
3. Stop saying, "Do you have any questions?" and start asking, "What questions do you have?"

One month later, teachers reported a change happening in their classrooms. Students stopped asking, "What are we doing today?" and instead asked questions to clarify their understanding. This quick win helped the staff understand the impact they have on student engagement and student achievement.

ENGAGED LEARNING STRATEGIES

Monthly professional learning followed with a focus on specific learning strategies linked to Marzano et al.'s (2001) research on brain theory and engaged learning, which would align with the Common Core standards in reading. We modeled, practiced, and monitored a dozen different strategies over the course of several months.

We conducted monthly walk-throughs with the principal to collect data on the level of implementation. The staff set a goal of 80% for the level of implementation in all classrooms. This was monitored through classroom observation, self-reported surveys, and examination of artifacts during our learning time.

By the end of the 2011 school year, we easily attained the 80% benchmark for implementation. It was rare to see a student's head down on a desk. Teaching became more focused, and grades were beginning to improve. Implementation of the Common Core State Standards was paying off.

IMPACT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

During the 2011-12 school year, we began to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies on student achievement. We determined that the most important skill students needed was summarization, which is Common Core Reading Standard 2. The importance of this skill is noted by Marzano et al. (2001), the What Works Clearinghouse (http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc),

STAR READING ASSESSMENT COMPARISON

Percent of students reading at 10th-grade level or above

GRADE 9		GRADE 10		GRADE 11		GRADE 12	
October 2011	**May 2012**	**October 2011**	**May 2012**	**October 2011**	**May 2012**	**October 2011**	**May 2012**
9.9%	23.7%	21.6%	33.5%	25.3%	36.2%	45.6%	53.1%

and the *Handbook of Research on Improving Student Achievement* (Cawelti, 2004). Students also need this skill to write effectively without plagiarizing.

To assess the effectiveness of what we were doing, we selected several data collection points. All students took the STAR reading test quarterly. In addition, all 11th-grade students took the ACT, and all students took a quarterly summarization performance assessment.

Three departments participated in the performance assessment: social studies, science, and noncore classes. Teachers gave all third-hour classes the same content article or editorial from *USA Today* or other similar sources. Students read the article and wrote a 40- to 50-word summary. Teachers brought these summaries to the monthly professional learning session and scored them using a common rubric. Teachers then analyzed the data and developed a plan for improvement as identified in Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011).

The first data collection in October 2011 was a sobering experience for all teachers (see p. 40). The results were not encouraging, but the conversation they generated was very encouraging. Because of the early win teachers had experienced setting the stage for learning and the impact the learning strategies had on student engagement and grades, staff knew they could make a difference in the summarization data.

During the next three quarterly data collections, student performance began to rise dramatically (see p. 40). So did reading assessment (see above) and ACT data. At each meeting, departments discussed what was working in their classrooms and began sharing across departments.

They saw themselves as not only a professional learning community but also a community of learners sharing effective practices and evaluating their results through action research and collegial dialogue.

While the STAR reading test provided information on student achievement, the driving force for improvement came from the performance data teachers collected. Teachers owned the performance results because they saw the direct link between what they were doing in their classrooms and student achievement. No longer in the bottom 5% in the state, the school has risen to the 55th percentile.

NEXT STEPS

At the start of the 2012-13 school year, staff met to review and align the curriculum with the Common Core State Standards. They understand the importance of writing in improving student achievement, and they developed a plan to incorporate writing in all classrooms. We taught, modeled, and assessed a common writing process with clearly identified learner actions in all English language arts classrooms. All non-English language arts classrooms are ready to implement this process and require its use in all writing assignments and assessments.

The first data collection was a sobering experience.

The district's middle school replicated the process during the 2012-13 school year. The high school teachers now face the daunting task of sustaining and improving upon the results seen during the year before and maintaining their focus on the learner outcome of literacy for all. Knowing that the district has made systemic improvement a priority provides encouragement as they move into the new school year.

Teachers in all classrooms understand and implement the Common Core. Staff is working collaboratively, professional development is focused on student achievement, and literacy is a common conversation in all departments. Students can discuss the impact of summarization in their learning and how writing is improved through working with a clearly defined process. The school is becoming a community of learners.

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BUILDING COMMON KNOWLEDGE

WHAT TEACHERS NEED, AND HOW DISTRICTS CAN HELP

By Garth McKinney

To implement the Common Core State Standards, teachers will need a broader knowledge base, a more diverse tool kit for teaching and learning, and greater experience with teaching in a standards-based environment. The growth required over the next three years seems to be large.

I work in a district that has provided an ongoing, continual approach to teaching toward these standards by engaging teacher content teams with standards consultants throughout the school year. Over the last three years, we 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. After observing and participating in this work for the last year, I believe the following steps are crucial for what teachers should be able to both comprehend and implement.

UNPACK FIRST

This learning process began three years ago by first "unpacking" standards — dissecting the wording to look for skills and knowledge. We also designated power standards that we all would teach and felt were the most important.

This process must be a primary one, as teachers first look for skills and knowledge necessary for students to attain before beginning to design instruction.

Although teachers didn't know it, we were following recommendations from Wiggins and McTighe (2001) for translating the standards from the state frameworks to teacher-based terminology for classroom instruction. Wiggins and McTighe believe that unpacking the standards is the third of five big ideas for implementing the Common Core.

BUILD SHARED UNDERSTANDING

Wiggins and McTighe (2001) suggest starting backwards by keeping the end in mind, rather than designing a series of activities built on one another. This process asks teachers to start to "identify desired results, determine ac-

Garth McKinney celebrates with students and teachers at Merrimack Middle School after being named Teacher of the Year by the New Hampshire Teachers of English.

ceptable evidence, and plan learning experiences" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2001, pp. 9-10).

For us, this first step was a struggle because we were new to the process, the language, theory, and practice. However, three years later, as we talk together, this process has paid off as we all see a common path of learning for students and have a shared understanding to build on.

Furthermore, this process has shifted practice away from independent classroom teacher activities to a common approach that focuses more on the big ideas that are important for students to know and be able to do. These are the skills and knowledge necessary for success (Wiggins & McTighe, 2001, pp. 9-10).

DEVELOP STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT

Students must grow not only as learners but also as evaluators of their own learning. Last year, we began designing learning progressions, which were valuable in thinking about student misconceptions before instruction rather than during. However, many teachers viewed this as a rubric for scoring student work — which it is not — so developing this for a number of units was, and still is, a challenge for some.

Students must grow not only as learners but also as evaluators of their own learning.

As we now implement two new common standards-based units, these progressions are more important for students to assess their learning with a tool that ties into a common language about the big ideas for each unit and links to feedback they get from formative assessments.

We have made a commitment to post learning goals and success criteria for students this year, but our next step may be to learn progressions as well so that students can

FORGING A PATH TO STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING

By Debbie Woelflein

Ten years ago, our district embraced the New Hampshire vision of professional growth based on reflection, self-assessment, student performance data, and deliberate planning, all documented with a body of evidence.

We began by shifting our emphasis to job-embedded professional learning, helping staff members gain confidence in their ability to plan for and carry out personalized growth plans that included collaboration with their peers.

Working with outside consultants from WestEd Learning Innovations, the district leadership team studied and applied the Concerns-Based Adoption Model and sought training in cognitive coaching to help staff progress through the seven Stages of Concern in accepting change (Holloway, 2003, p. 3).

Our district planned a four-year entry into a new model for professional growth, working slowly and carefully to provide support while challenging each educator to put student learning at the center of his or her plan. We have moved during these 10 years from the "awareness" stage of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model all the way up to the "refocusing stage," with two revisions of our district professional development master plan.

This shift in the way that district educators viewed their own learning laid the groundwork for Merrimack Middle School's work in moving from a teacher-centered, individualistic approach to a student-centered, collaborative way of doing business.

Instructional leaders read Kate Jamentz' *Isolation Is the Enemy of Improvement* (2002), slowly coming to understand its message as they experienced the energy and excitement that comes with real collaboration, far more significant than the collegiality that they had previously aimed for in meetings that they grudgingly attended.

One veteran teacher's first reaction to the standards-based shift was, "Just leave me alone. I'm getting ready to retire, and I don't want to change. I want to be left in peace to do my own thing. I don't need to talk to anyone about what I do."

Visitors to our school tell us that they feel the difference in every part of the building. Noting model products on display, evidence of frequent team teaching, standards and objectives posted in classrooms, they see signs of consistency across teams combined with creativity within each area. They point out the number of educators who serve as facilitators of learning, not only in their classrooms, but also with their colleagues.

The most powerful testimony about teacher learning, however, comes from the educators. That resistant veteran teacher has become an influential instructional leader, an early adopter of technology, an avid reader of research on assessment, and a force who lures other veterans into his classroom to share his enthusiasm about his successes in making learning come alive for students.

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visually see where they are with their learning and where they need to go next.

MODEL QUALITY INSTRUCTION

Teachers have started to work differently in their classrooms as a result of this work. They have become better facilitators of learning by modeling quality instruction, including important concepts and strategies. Students then practice these concepts and strategies with support through small groups, triads, or partners. While monitoring progress, students are then asked to individually apply their new learning in order to meet the standards.

DIFFERENTIATE

Language arts lends itself nicely to differentiation by varying the reading level and challenge of books, scaffolding support with models, and adjusting the writing for students to provide the appropriate level of support and challenge.

Differentiating the process, product, or content should become more the norm, not the exception, as teachers review results from formative assessments to see the paths that students must travel to become proficient for each standard (Tomlinson, 2000, p. 1).

With the growing needs of students and the expanding capacity of teachers, we have moved to flexible groupings that allow students options and choices to complete standards-based activities rather than being confined by a structure.

This opportunity motivates students, provides them with choices, and reduces compliance and behavior issues in the classroom.

GATHER FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Gathering data and information through formative assessments should be more commonplace as teachers should be tracking where each student is in his or her progression toward mastery. This does not mean not giving summative assessments, but rather allowing ample time for modeling, practice, and support.

Formative assessments check for understanding and are designed to inform teaching and learning, not a summative or final exam grade (Fisher & Frey, 2007, p. 2). In addition, formative assessments may be designed and administered collaboratively to creative common formative assessments, which give more information to teachers and allow for reflection, discussion, and innovation.

One of our school's favorite resources is *25 Quick Formative Assessments for a Differentiated Classroom* (Dodge, 2009), which has short, creative assessments that can be used for a variety of subject areas. Some examples that we use include using dry erase boards, sheet protectors, 3-2-1 summarizers, quick write/quick draw, and top 10 lists. These templates work well as we ask students to show what they know. These assessments are not part of the grade book, but rather part of a conversation among educators about what each student has learned and still needs to learn.

WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER

In a standards-based classroom, teachers should be working smarter, not harder, by looking to students to complete more work than teachers. Teachers should be looking at the big picture of learning and guiding students down a path of achievement while also managing a classroom day to day.

This requires both attention to detail and broader thinking, which is a shift for many teachers from the narrow focus of daily activities for students. For example, we have now shifted toward more product-based assessments that go beyond the literary essay and require student engagement by completing what Amy Benjamin calls a "nontraditional task requiring imagination and creative thinking" (Benjamin, 2008, p. 134). Our favorite resource for this is *Formative Assessment for English Language Arts: A Guide for Middle and High School Teachers* (Benjamin, 2008).

EXPAND TEACHING RESOURCES

Teachers need access to more resources in order to meet the needs of all students. This is a challenge for teachers. Many struggle to find appropriate materials while also ensuring that students with diverse needs meet a standard or learning goal within a certain period of time.

Time is critical, and there is never enough of it, so teachers must find quick and appropriate ways to use class time wisely. For example, our 8th-grade teachers are looking for more short story selections at a variety of reading levels so that readers of all abilities can access the text and then demonstrate their abilities to identify story elements, such as irony or flashbacks. If students are successful at this step, then we move them into novels at their reading level.

SEEK CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

It is becoming more rare to teach a novel to a whole class. Both students and teachers need a greater variety of book options. The range of abilities in a middle school classroom continues to grow, so having more books that are interesting to students as well as challenging for the more advanced students has increased in importance.

The challenge for school systems is to provide funds for purchases, cross-check book usage between schools, and read and review novels to screen for mature or possible challenged content.

A resource that we have turned to is *Creative Book Reports: Fun Projects with Rubrics for Fiction and Nonfiction* (Feber, 2004), which we have used to create smaller nonfiction research projects for students to complete before some of our novel units on weather and the Civil War. I've also used this resource to create a final assessment on story elements for a coming-of-age novel study.

ALIGN ASSESSMENT

Assessment is the most challenging area because many teachers may resist rubrics and standards-based grading, preferring to stay with scoring guides or traditional grading, which can be subjective.

Many middle and high schools still have conventional letter and/or numeric grades, while some have designed hybrids that combine all three: numbers, letters, and standards. Many elementary schools have long since converted to standards-based reporting, but the shift at the middle and high school levels has taken more time.

We have worked to assess in a balanced way, using rubrics and numeric grades throughout the year. More importantly, our assessment is more open and transparent for students. Students know what the learning goals and success criteria are for each unit because they are posted in each classroom.

Some teachers have gone one step further by asking for student self-reflections before, during, and after instruction. Students indicate whether they have the skill yet or if they need more assistance. This is helpful both for student growth and for the teacher to design differentiated lessons.

SUPPORT FROM ADMINISTRATORS

Many of these initiatives could not happen without the planning, dedication, and support of administrators. After observing and participating in the work for the last year, I believe the following items are crucial for what administrators should know and be able to do.

Continued on p. 54

READING, WRITING, *and* RUBRICS

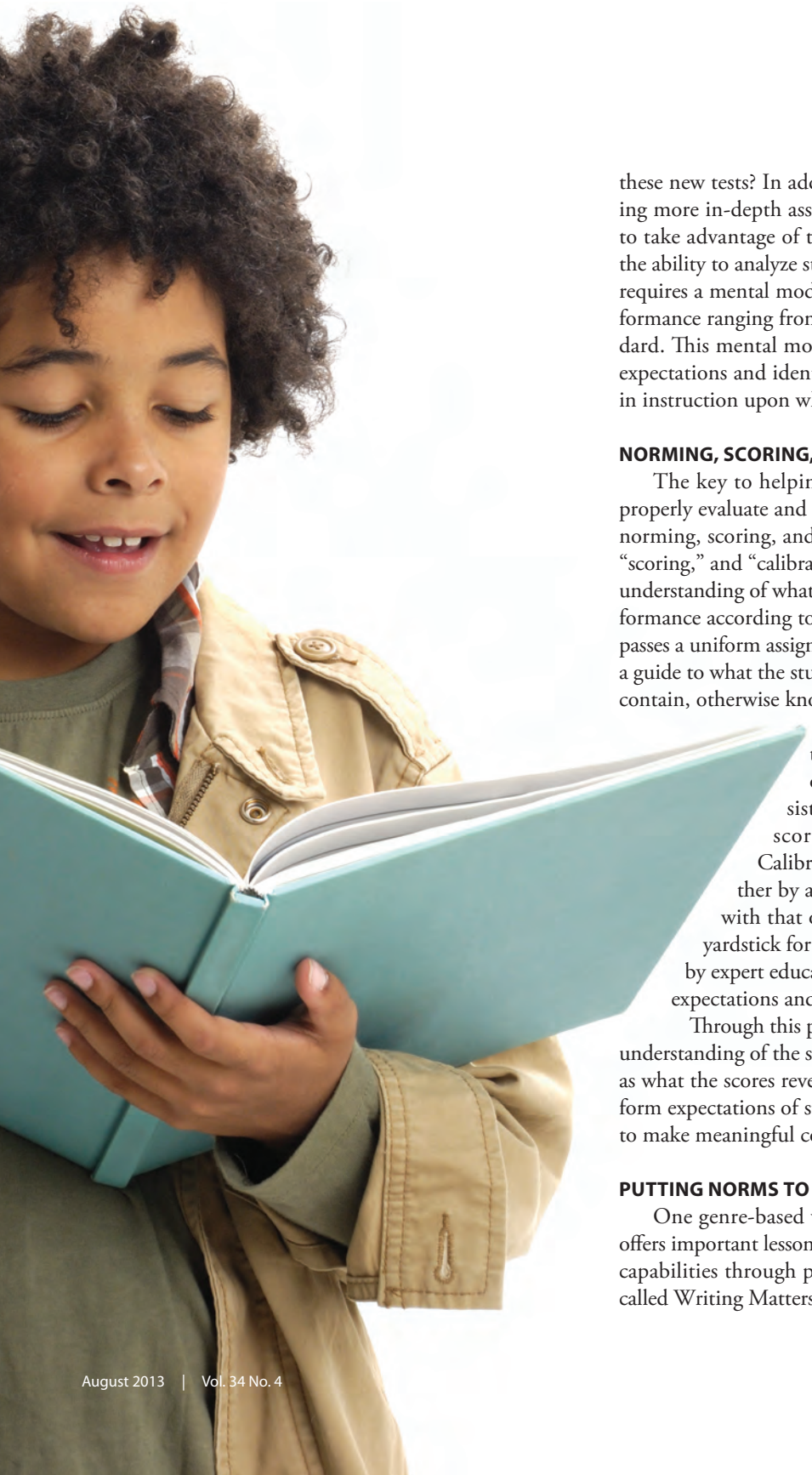
NORMING PROCESS GUIDES TEACHERS AS THEY EVALUATE STUDENT WORK

By Libby Baker, Naomi Cooperman, and Barbara Storandt

Common Core State Standards are raising expectations nationwide about what teachers impart to their students and the depth of knowledge those students attain. The goal is for students to receive instruction that enables them to synthesize and creatively use what they have learned, thus equipping them for post-secondary school challenges. Quality curriculum and teaching are essential elements in this equation. Meaningful assessment is another critical component.

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, from tests that predominantly rely on short-answer "bubble" items to performance tasks that measure higher-order thinking. Beyond that, the best assessments are a feedback tool for teachers, supplying information needed for modifying instruction to more closely address student needs.

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. This mental model is a foundation for establishing expectations and identifying learning gaps as well as gaps in instruction upon which the assessment is based.

NORMING, SCORING, AND CALIBRATING

The key to helping teachers grow in their ability to properly evaluate and respond to student work is through norming, scoring, and calibrating. The terms "norming," "scoring," and "calibrating" refer to developing a common understanding of what is expected in terms of student performance according to a common reference. That encompasses a uniform assignment, performance task, or test and a guide to what the student answer or performance should contain, otherwise known as a rubric.

Norming is when teachers align their scoring so that every member of the team applies the rubric consistently across students and teachers score consistently with one another. Calibrating takes the process one step further by asking teachers to align their scoring with that of an expert. Anchor papers are the yardstick for scoring. They are scored in advance by expert educators and serve as models that clarify expectations and interpretation of the rubric.

Through this process, teachers establish a common understanding of the student work they are scoring as well as what the scores reveal. Having similar scoring and uniform expectations of student work is essential for teachers to make meaningful comparisons among students.

PUTTING NORMS TO WORK

One genre-based writing program for middle school offers important lessons for expanding teachers' assessment capabilities through professional learning. The program, called Writing Matters, is built around a clear road map of

rigorous lessons aligned with the Common Core.

The program was developed by Teaching Matters, a nonprofit organization focused on increasing teacher effectiveness. Naomi Cooperman and Libby Baker are members of the Teaching Matters team that designed and piloted the curriculum and developed teacher institutes and scoring conferences. Barbara Storandt, an external evaluator responsible for measuring the program's effectiveness, also contributed to the design of the scoring conference and analyzed results.

Writing Matters was first introduced in about a dozen New York City middle schools in 2006, growing over the years to full implementation in about 65 schools per year. Schools ranged from small (fewer than 300 students) to large (more than 1,000 students). As is typical of urban schools, these sites are characterized by high numbers of students qualifying for free lunch, high proportions of English language learners, and high numbers of teachers with less than five years of experience.

As with any instruction, the road map can go only so far. In early iterations, student outcomes from exposure to the Common Core-aligned program didn't produce robust positive outcomes.

Teachers especially needed support with scoring student writing. Some teachers didn't respond to the work in as detailed and specific a way as necessary for students to attain the new standards. Their deficit might have been a knowledge gap because they didn't fully understand what they should have been looking for in student work, or their overall expectations were too low, or their scoring was on a relative basis, comparing peers instead of evaluating the work against a more universal standard. Other teachers weren't scoring the writing at all or as often as needed. That might have been a time management problem or a lack of commitment.

With this in mind, Teaching Matters refined the program, combining a cohesive, research-based curriculum with a detailed assessment and coaching regime. As a result, teachers got better information from students' work and were able to adjust instruction accordingly. A 2011-12 evaluation showed that students in Writing Matters schools made substantial gains in their writing, matching those of comparison students in schools with fewer challenges. In contrast, students with similar baseline performance levels in comparison schools declined at some schools and made similar gains overall, even though these schools had fewer challenges.

NORMING TIP

It is important to revisit the norming process frequently. Norming brings teachers' scoring into calibration, but the passage of time can gradually bring teachers out of calibration. To ensure calibration, insert scored anchor papers into the pile of work to be scored. Teachers rate these papers without knowing that they are there. By comparing teachers' scores to the expert scores, it is possible check for ongoing calibration to assure reliability (C. McClellan, 2010, personal communication, February 23, 2011).

WHAT NORMING LOOKS LIKE

To develop a protocol for norming and scoring, Teaching Matters followed the lead of national organizations such as the National Writing Project (P. LeMahieu, personal communication, June 16, 2010; Swain & LeMahieu, 2012) and Educational Testing Service (C. McClellan, personal communication, February 23, 2011).

Required materials for a norming session include:

- Anchor papers (recommended).
- Practice papers.
- Additional copies of blank rubrics for participants to score on.

The norming and scoring process has seven steps.

1. **Review the process.**
   - Discuss the value of norming and scoring.
   - Emphasize that measurement is only useful if scoring is consistent.
2. **Discuss the prompt.**
   - Read the prompt or discuss the task that students were assigned.
3. **Review the rubric.**
   - Review dimension definitions.
   - Identify components within each dimension.
4. **Review the anchor papers.**
   - Read anchor papers.
   - Review commentary on anchor papers in order to fully understand scoring.
5. **Score practice papers.**
   - Read a practice paper.
   - Score paper independently using rubric.
6. **Compare scores and discuss.**
   - Discuss impressions of student work.
   - Compare teacher scores.
7. **Compare scores to expert.**
   - Compare teacher scores to expert scores.
   - If discrepant, refer to rubric and anchor papers for insight.
   - Repeat scoring practice papers and comparing scores until high level of agreement is reached.

TEACHER LEARNING AND SUPPORT

Norming and scoring of student work serves two purposes. In addition to evaluating student mastery, it serves as a valuable form of professional learning. Teachers deepen their understanding of the characteristics of good writing as expressed in the Common Core State Standards and how students' mastery

evolves over time. Equally important, they develop shared vocabulary and expectations (Swain & LeMahieu, 2012; P. LeMahieu, personal communication, June 16, 2010). Calibration provides much-needed feedback that allows the team to plan additional teacher support.

One teacher in the Writing Matters program reported: "We really appreciated having a coach to walk us through the scoring and assessment process using an analytic rubric since we had never really used one before. That gave me more confidence in using the rubric because I had a better understanding of what the dimensions meant and what evidence could be used to support each dimension."

A teacher from the school with the highest writing gains said: "Norming and calibration really enhanced my understanding of the rubrics and the process of getting the data we looked at together in our groups."

For more information on Writing Matters, visit **www.teachingmatters.org.**

An independent external evaluation of Writing Matters showed that norming and scoring helped teachers overcome typical assessment challenges such as understanding the value of assessment, inconsistent scoring, and resistance to data (Datnow, Park, & Kennedy-Lewis, 2012).

Key outcomes include:

- Teachers who participated in norming and scoring became more consistent assessors.
- Teachers became more insightful as diagnosticians and instructional decision makers. Data resulting from the analysis of student work informed teachers' next-step conversations in their English language arts teams.
- Teachers developed a richer common vocabulary about data and assessment as a result of participation in norming, scoring, and calibration. Through scoring in groups, teachers learned how to evaluate, discuss, and grade student work. Teachers in one school had never used analytic rubrics before Writing Matters coaching.
- Scoring the work increased teacher buy-in of assessment data. Norming and scoring were especially important for revealing how teachers, especially those who may not have completely bought into the process, could more accurately and systematically view student work and sustain these changes. One teacher reported: "I feel like the teachers in my group reflected more honestly about what's going on in the classroom because everything was transparent up until that point. We were all using the same lessons, assessments, and rubrics. There was less guessing and hoping because we were more systematic and aware of what was actually being done. By talking about data, we stayed more focused on what we were doing and why."
- Overall, alignment within the program — materials, assessments and scoring procedures — facilitated discussion about instructional action focused on expectations related to Common Core. One teacher said: "It was so much easier to manage individual student progress when we used common assessments, the same rubric, and trackers to follow students. In our team meetings, we knew everyone would be on the same page, and we could take it further to talk about which kids were struggling and why and what we could do about it."

ROLE IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Norming and scoring need to be foundational elements of schoolwide and districtwide professional learning plans. These practices facilitate teacher reflection and collaboration around learning and teaching, both of which are key to improving instruction regardless of the subject area being taught.

Norming and scoring also increase teachers' data literacy — a necessary but assumed competency with the Common Core transition. Since most teachers typically don't receive preparation, training, or support in this area, job-embedded norming and scoring fill a critical gap.

A consistent and feasible system for incorporating this process in schools is needed, but many schools aren't yet ready to take up this additional demand. Successful implementation requires significant teacher training as well as structures and time to do this work. It can be done, however, by starting small and using existing models as a start. The results in terms of habits of mind, practice, and student success are worth the effort.

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FLEX YOUR SCHOOL'S DATA MUSCLES

LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES STRENGTHEN DATA'S IMPACT

By Jennifer Unger

A colleague tells a story about her experience as a teacher in a university lab classroom. She talks about the day when a visiting team of university professors came to observe her small group of 2nd graders engage with her in a mathematics lesson on fractions using manipulatives.

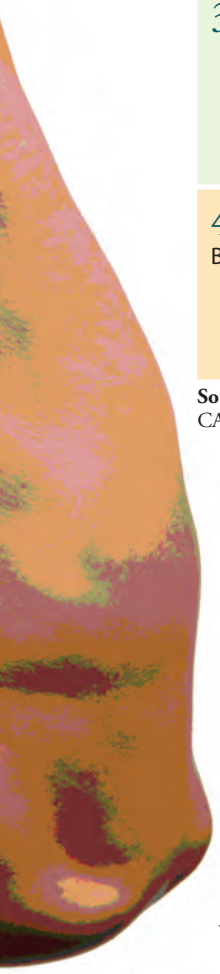
The professors arrived and watched the lesson from an observation room, where an opaque screen allowed them to observe unseen while hearing both the lesson and the students.

My colleague was overjoyed. The kids were so engaged and working intensely with the manipulatives to complete the activities. At the end of the lesson, she thanked them for their effort and hard

LEADERSHIP FOR A HIGH-PERFORMING DATA CULTURE

Element	Less emphasis on:	More emphasis on:
1 DATA USE	• Using data to punish or reward schools and sort students. • Infrequent use by the school community to inform action.	• Using data as feedback for continuous improvement and to serve students. • Frequent and in-depth use by entire school community.
2 COLLABORATION	• Teacher isolation. • Top-down, data-driven decision making. • No time or structure for collaboration.	• Shared norms and values. • Ongoing data-driven dialogue and collaborative inquiry. • Time and structure for collaboration.
3 EQUITY	• Belief that only the "brightest" can achieve at high levels. • Talk about race and class is taboo. • Culturally destructive or color-blind responses to diversity.	• Belief that all children are capable of high levels of achievement. • Ongoing dialogue about race, class, and privilege. • Culturally proficient responses to diversity.
4 RESEARCH AND BEST PRACTICE	• Decision making based on instinct and intuition. • Continuing past practices that yield little or no results.	• Using findings from research and best practice in conjunction with previous experiences to inform instructional decisions. • Making changes in classroom practices and monitoring results and impact.

Source: Adapted from Love, N., Stiles, K., Mundry, S., & DiRanna, K. (2008). *The data coach's guide to improving learning for all students.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. Used with permission.



work. As the groups began to put away their materials, she noticed one student go over to the observation screen.

Pressing his forehead and nose against the screen, the student said, "Hi. I know you're in there. I can hear your pencils scratching."

"Yes, we are here," said one of the observers. "Thank you for letting us watch your math lesson."

"Yes," the student replied, "we are working very, very hard, but we don't know what we are doing."

My colleague's pleasure slowly diminished as she considered her student's statement.

I frequently think of this story as I work with educational leaders to assist them in using data. I sometimes feel that we are all working very, very hard, but we are not always sure of what we are doing and why.

What is keeping educators from moving districts and schools to high-performing data cultures? What vital role does leadership play? For the past several years, school and district leaders, facilitators from TERC's Using Data initiative, and I have worked on these questions. TERC's Using Data, in Cambridge, Mass., provides professional development and technical assistance on establishing and sustaining a system for effective use of data at all levels to school districts and schools across the United States.

Three years ago, as a senior designer and facilitator of this work, I developed a data leadership academy to address

challenges for leaders, whether they hailed from large school districts (e.g. Jacksonville, Fla.) or from smaller school districts and even individual schools. The goal is to establish a firm foundation for effective data use by all stakeholders in their educational systems. Academy content not only reflected on our own experiences, but also what research, best practice literature, and national/state leadership standards were suggesting (see data resources in the box on p. 53). Two major themes emerged.

First, data use is frequently seen as a stand-alone initiative, something that educators do independently from everything else. Educators participate in data days, data retreats, data academies, etc., and, although these have value, most seem disconnected from the classroom.

Second, educators don't always have the big picture of what a high-performing data culture looks and sounds like and, as a result, fail to establish the systems and supports that will achieve it. Too often, they get tied up in details and lose momentum.

In response to these themes, we developed a model (see chart on p. 51) to help leaders create and hold onto a big-picture vision for high-performing data cultures (Love, Stiles, Mundry, & DiRanna, 2008). Research and best practices show that high-performing data cultures exhibit characteristics listed under the heading "more emphasis on" (White & McIntosh, 2007; Miller, 2009; Armstrong & Anthes, 2001; Nunnaley, 2013).

DATA USE

Most leaders provide opportunities for staff to build their data literacy skills as well as access and analyze data. A good start, yet many leaders we worked with reported that teachers still were not using data to make changes and improve instruction. How can leaders move toward a vision where everyone is using data continuously with a focus on student learning?

For many leaders, it became clear that, while many had developed assessment calendars for the school year, they didn't have a plan in place for actual analysis and use of the data.

To address this, we helped leaders develop plans for using the data that they were collecting and integrating that plan into their assessment calendars. These calendars now included a variety of data sources and measures, a timeframe for collecting and analyzing data, the individuals and groups responsible for analysis and reporting, and the setting or venue for the analysis (e.g. grade-level teams, professional learning communities, faculty meeting, release time, instructional coaches meeting, etc.).

As leaders worked to establish their plans for data use, two issues emerged. First, they were still focusing most of their attention on state assessment results, and, while interim assessments and benchmark assessments might be in place, staff were not using them. Second, many staff were disengaged from the data analysis process because, as many of them told me, "We don't have any data."

If educators' vision is to engage the entire school community, then leaders must determine what other data they need to collect in order to assess learning in other content areas or grade levels. For example, what data might teachers and staff in K-2, the arts, physical education, health, attendance, career guidance, etc., collect and have available that might assist them in understanding how students are faring with regard to their stated standards or outcomes? What questions might these groups be asking about student learning and their relationship to it? What measures and data sources can leaders identify and provide to assist them in responding to those important questions?

Creating a plan for data use will serve as a structure to support continuous data use by all while embedding it into the day-to-day work of districts and schools.

COLLABORATION

The second piece of the big picture of a high-performing data culture is collaboration. Leaders know that teacher collaboration makes a difference for student learning (Kruse, Louis, & Bryk, 1994; Leana, 2011; Lieberman & Miller, 2008) and that one leadership role is to support structures and systems that enable it. Effective data use is not a show-and-tell. It is an engagement and a learning experience.

Many districts and schools have structured time for collaboration. However, is data a critical part of the collaborative conversation? To what extent is data being used to support and forward the teaching and learning conversation? Are teachers and stakeholders using data, including student work, as evidence of progress or lack of it? If data use is to be effective, it must be central to and fuel the dialogue that educators have with each other about teaching and learning. Even when groups are in place, data use is not automatically ensured.

Effective leaders of data use identify opportunities for collaboration in their district and school schedules and establish *clear expectations* that data is used to support these dialogues. Leaders will need not only to set expectations to use data but also to assist groups in developing data literacy skills, establishing norms for collaboration, and providing protocols that will enable safe and productive data dialogues (Wellman & Lipton, 2003; Love et al., 2008; Garmston & Wellman, 1998).

EQUITY

A third piece of the high-performing data culture picture is equity. What is the leader's role in using data to ensure that each student is getting the support he or she needs to meet or exceed the standards? What does the leader need to know and be able to do to move the culture toward one that believes that each child is capable of high levels of achievement (Singleton & Linton, 2006; Linton, 2010)?

No Child Left Behind has pushed educators to disaggregate data. Educators know the importance of examining data to explore how various groups are doing compared to other groups. At first, they frequently discover that what looked like good news for some students is anything but for others. Disag-

gregated data play a very big role in helping educators explore questions about the degree to which they are able to serve the needs of different groups of students. Disaggregating data makes the invisible visible (Mather, 2012).

At the district level, this can uncover issues that may not surface at the school level. I frequently hear school leaders say that they don't have the numbers of students to warrant disaggregating data, while at the district level, leaders are concerned about why English language learners or special education students are not doing as well as other students. At the school level, leaders will want to make certain that the data being analyzed can be disaggregated to surface any potential achievement gaps.

As groups begin to analyze data and ask questions about why they are getting the results they are seeing, they need to be able to answer questions such as: "To what extent are our male Hispanic students included in this high-performing group?" or "How many of the students in this performance level are frequently absent or tardy from school?"

Having access to a variety of disaggregated data will deepen the data dialogue and enable educators to question the extent to which they believe that all students can learn. Disaggregated data can be a springboard for next steps and conversations about the degree to which educators are prepared to serve students from different backgrounds and what knowledge and skills they will need to acquire to improve their efforts.

RESEARCH AND BEST PRACTICE

This fourth piece of the high-performing data culture puzzle is important for all educators to grapple with. Frequently, the mere mention of research and best practice is met with skepticism. Where can leaders find time to engage with research and best practices, let alone provide leadership for others?

This is an important question for district and school leaders. Most of us secretly harbor the belief that we really can do the same thing over and over again and get different results. Engaging with the right research and best practice literature can help leaders consider what they might do differently in order to improve results.

If leaders want classrooms to reflect a repertoire of effective instructional strategies, they will know, understand, and use not only what other colleagues are finding successful but also what research and best practice is showing them about what works.

We advise leaders to start with what they know and catalogue their current repertoire first. Consider district or school professional development initiatives for the last couple of years. In what ways do these initiatives reflect research-based practices? Work with other leaders to brainstorm possible sources of research and best practices from their knowledge and experiences, e.g. state departments of education, university coursework, association memberships and journals, and online resources.

How do leaders identify what research and best practices resources are *most important* to put on the table? As groups engage with data, let the questions they are raising lead the way: Why are we getting these results? Are our assessment strategies fully aligned with the standards? What assessment practices have the most impact on student learning? Are our expectations for students the same for each student, and what impact might it be having on their learning? What instructional strategies should we be using to better meet the needs of our English language learners?

Research can help leaders understand not only why they might be getting the results they are, but also bring them to a deeper understanding of what the practice might look and sound like in the school and classroom. Having a deeper understanding and a vision for what it looks like in practice can lead to changed practice and improved results.

DATA RESOURCES

Ask a REL
http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/askarel

Learning Forward
www.learningforward.org/standards/data

National Council of Teachers of English
www.ncte.org

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
www.nctm.org

PD 360
www.pd360.com

Regional Educational Laboratories
http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs

TERC's Using Data
http://usingdata.terc.edu

The Education Trust
www.edtrust.org

WestEd
www.wested.org

What Works Clearinghouse
http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc

World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment
www.wida.us

LAY THE GROUNDWORK

If schools and classrooms are to become high-performing data cultures that get results, then leaders need to work together to forge a shared vision that connects the pieces and lays the groundwork for successful implementation. When we can bring this picture together, not only will students be learning at high levels, but leaders and teachers will be as well.

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Continued from p. 45

Develop a school culture that supports innovation and excellence. Change means loss for so many teachers. Their reactions tend to fall into two categories: "This new initiative will never last" or "what I am going to do with the seven years of materials I developed?"

After three years of coaching, supporting, listening, and calming teachers, we now have a school that supports standards-based work. We have designated leaders in each department area who lead and support teachers.

These leaders modeled for teachers how formative assessments could be used effectively in each subject area. Leaders meet with the principal and assistant principal each month and report our progress to the school board at the end of year. Developing a school culture that supports innovation and excellence is not easy, but with patience, commitment, and the help of teacher leadership, it can be done.

Invest in professional learning. Our principal and assistant principal have repeatedly said over the last two years that it is all about support and challenge for teachers and students. For teachers, it has been a challenge to make this instructional shift in thinking and practice and to design the necessary materials to support the work. We have had the support of time and resources for professional learning, including books, articles, and an outside consultant from WestEd Learning Innovations.

Support at the school level could not happen without assistance from central office, where both the superintendent and assistant superintendent monitor and support the process. Without this, we couldn't have accomplished all that we did.

Build in time, time, and more time. Over the past three years, the time commitment has been consistent and expansive, including after-school department meeting time, summer institutes, professional learning days, and release days from the classroom with substitute teacher coverage.

Now we have time during the school day to meet, collaborate, review common formative assessments, and/or share effective practices. Staying the course by providing the time and structure for teacher teams to collaborate and complete the work has been essential.

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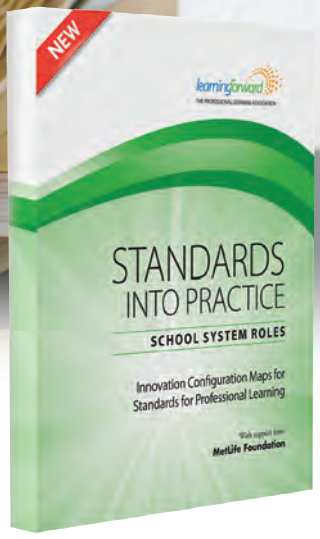

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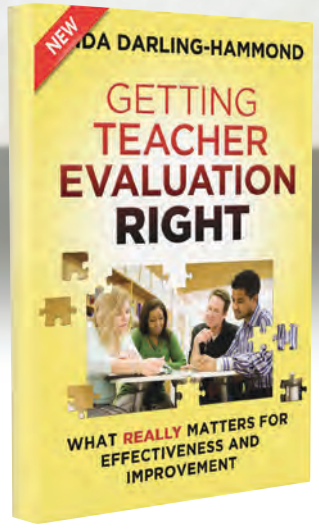

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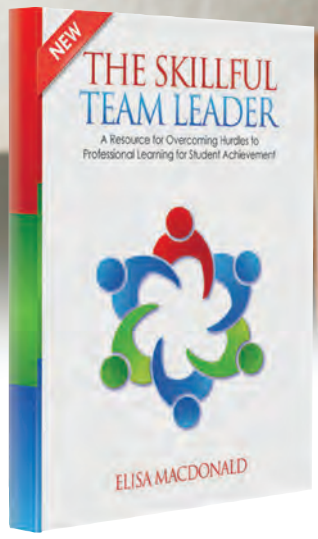

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THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

A CONVERSATION FOCUSED ON CONTENT CLARIFIES TEACHING OBJECTIVES

By Jon Saphier

I recently had a 15-minute conversation with a very capable middle school science teacher that radically transformed the three-lesson mini-unit she was about to teach on the human respiratory system. I hasten to add that all the improvement in the lessons came from the teacher, not me. My only role was to follow the discipline of focusing the conversation *only* on the content for those few minutes, getting her to explain certain aspects of it to me, and keeping the conversation away from all the other topics: activities, materials, groupings, concerns about particular students, etc.

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. More rigorous conference protocols may ask the observer to get the statement in language that defines what "students will know or be able to do." But then the conference moves on to assessments, student activities, grouping, and concerns about particular students.

Watch a content planning conference take place with science teachers who are members of a common planning time team. **www.rbteach.com**

Here is an alternative to that approach: Dwell for 10 to 15 minutes on conferring with a singular focus on the actual content and no dialogue *at all* yet about the activities or other aspects of the lesson. This process can yield huge dividends. Such a conversation may be called "digging deeply into content" for the relationship of ideas in it, and

the items that should be isolated and highlighted because they are difficult, easily missed, or especially important.

These 10- to 15-minute content analysis conversations, whether or not followed by observation and feedback, can be immensely helpful to teachers and thus their students because they generate clearer thinking on the teacher's part about objectives. In addition, these conversations make clear what ideas should be highlighted and what relationship the ideas in the content have to each other.

This benefit will accrue to all teachers and their students, but these conversations are particularly necessary for those whose planning is weak. West and Staub first described the value of conversations similar to these in *Content-Focused Coaching* (2003).

As a result of my 15-minute conversation with the middle school science teacher, she realized what should be highlighted — and could easily have been drowned in the mass of material — in her three-lesson series on the human respiratory system.

These realizations, which came about because she had to explain the content to me in detail, dramatically changed the nature of the events in the lesson she taught. They also caused her to frame the lesson in a different form than originally planned and say it in student-friendly language. See her revised plan in the box at right.

THE MISSING LINK IN PLANNING

Between knowing the content and having a repertoire of content-specific pedagogical tools for the content is the intellectual capacity to *analyze* the content and tease out of it what is most worthwhile and what could be most confusing.

The best planners look at their materials: They do the problems, analyze the texts for a document-based question, read the short story for what is most important to milk out of it. And thus, for example, they replace the literature anthology's five comprehension questions on O. Henry's *Hearts and Hands* with an exploration of inferential language, because O. Henry loads his stories with clues a good inferential detective can decode ("Her cheeks tinged pink with recognition."). Or a good planner seeks connection between adolescent readers' experiences and the themes the story is built around: young love, humiliation, the compassion of an older person for a younger one.

REVISED LESSON PLAN ON THE HUMAN RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

Students will be able to:

- Describe the mechanism by which oxygen enters the body and the pathway it follows.
- Explain the magic moment when oxygen crosses cell membranes (the alveoli) into capillaries and thus enters the transportation system of the bloodstream/circulatory system.
- Explain the process by which oxygen does its work in the body.
- Explain what and how the respiratory system expels items the body needs to get rid of (carbon dioxide and water).

Big ideas:

- Every cell in the body needs oxygen, not just muscles. That includes bone marrow, hair, everything.
- When oxygen arrives at a cell, the chemical reaction within the cell of the oxygen with glucose releases energy. So oxygen is absolutely necessary for all cells to grow, muscles to move, etc.
- The bloodstream is the highway that carries oxygen to the cells.
- We also have to get rid of the carbon dioxide that is the product of this release of energy. If we didn't, we'd die. The respiratory system is taking care of this "get rid of the stuff" function as well as the delivery of oxygen to do its work.
- Respiration is a process, and it's a lot more than what we call "breathing."
- Respiration is a process for getting oxygen into the body so the oxygen can do its work.

Content planning conference guidelines, pp. 58-59.

The missing link in good lesson planning is examining the materials and the content itself for these valuable nuggets and for the relationship of ideas to one another. That act often transforms both the activities and the framing of activities one chooses for students. When practiced in 15-minute conversations with peers, coaches, or administrators, content analysis quickly becomes a habit of mind that individual teachers internalize. The reward is intellectual satisfaction as well as better student learning.

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HOW TO HAVE A CONTENT PLANNING CONVERSATION

A content planning conference 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.

Use these guidelines to conduct a conversation focused on content. These conversations are equally applicable in peer observations, coaching meetings, principal-teacher interactions, and common planning time meetings of teacher teams. This conversation format can lead to increased lesson clarity and student learning.

TIPS

- Don't start the conversation with "What are you going to do?" or "What are the student activities?" Resist all questions about the lesson, grouping, timing, and student activities until the discussion of content and objectives is complete.
- Make sure the objectives identified are worthy objectives. Do not allow objectives to focus on anything but content, and make sure that the selected objective is really worthwhile.
- Make sure to focus on specific definitions. Avoid generalities and such language as "stuff" or "things."
- Focus on understanding vs. the mechanics of completing a task or operation.

TEACHER MATERIALS

Basic level:

- Ask the teacher to bring all the materials that he or she plans to use, including books, worksheets, homework, and assessments.
- Ask the teacher to prepare the objective in student-friendly language.

Advanced:

- Ask the teacher to group the concepts in a hierarchical order.
- Ask the teacher to bring any examples of student work that might be relevant.

CONTENT PLANNING CONFERENCE GUIDELINES

STEPS	WHAT TO SAY
1 Dive right into the content.	• "What content will you be focusing on?"
2 Examine the materials that will be used to teach the content.	• "Is there a chapter in the book that goes with this content?" • "What materials will you be handing to the students?"
3 Focus on the key concepts that the teacher wants the students to take away from the lesson.	• "What are the most important things that you want them to understand?"
4 Delve deeply into the meaning of the content, with particular focus on the key concepts. (It is OK to admit you do not understand the material, as your struggle more than likely reflects student struggle and allows the teacher to get clearer about the content.)	• "Can you explain that a little further?" • "What exactly do you mean when you say 'process'…?" • "I'm not sure I understand…"
5 Group the concepts hierarchically. First identify what knowledge students must have to be successful in the new task. Then break down the current task into steps: What must be understood first in order to understand the complete concept?	• "So, what would students need to know from experience in order to be ready to move forward?" • "How would you break down this concept into parts?" • "Which part of this concept do you think students need to understand first?"
6 Have the teacher state the objective (big idea) in student-friendly language exactly as he or she plans to say it to the class and have the teacher explain how he or she plans to display the objectives.	• "How will you present the objectives to the class?" • "Say it aloud now just as if you were talking to the class." • "How will you present the information? On the board? Smartboard?"
7 Ask the teacher how he or she plans to track student progress and understanding.	• "How will you know if students are understanding or not?" • "Will you have an assessment?"
8 **Summarize**. a. Ask the teacher to summarize exactly what he or she wants the students to learn. b. Summarize the accomplishments of the conference thus far.	• "So, if you were to go around and interview the students at the end of the day, what would you want them to tell you to show they really understood?" • "So far, I think we have really gotten clear on the content and defined the objectives, which are …"
9 Now turn the focus to the activities. Make sure the activities relate directly to the objectives and that they do not require students to deal with too many variables.	• "OK, so now what are you going to have the students do?"

10 GOOD WAYS *to* ENSURE BAD PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

By Laura R. Thomas

School change is my work. I started as a teacher with an interest in adult learning, and now I try to change the world as an external school coach and faculty member at Antioch University New England. My primary work usually happens through the professional development channels of schools and districts, so I spend a lot of time thinking about good professional learning vs. typical professional development. Based on my 20-plus years of experience, as well as a bit of inspiration from Reuben Duncan, assistant superintendent in School Administrative Unit 29 in Keene, N.H., let me share with you the best possible ways to waste your professional development time and money.

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Laura R. Thomas (lthomas@antioch.edu) is director of the Antioch Center for School Renewal in Keene, N.H. ■

1 Worry more about the time than outcomes.

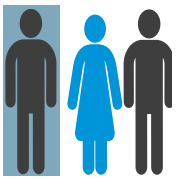
Start all professional learning conversations with questions like "how many days do we have?" rather than "what learning outcomes are we trying to achieve?"

2 Bring in a bevy of consultants.

Don't tell them about each other, assign each a specific project, and under no circumstances ask them to collaborate or coordinate. Require every teacher to work with each consultant separately, regardless of role, need, or timing.

3 Start something new every year without considering progress on or commitment to the previous years' goals.

Your teachers will find all that innovation energizing, not exhausting. They'll love the constant surprise of discovering which goal matters on any given day.

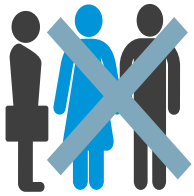


4 Assume the professional learning specialists you hire are out to get you.

Offer as little information as possible regarding the situation in your school, gloss over the real issues at play, and never share candidly.

5 Judge quality by the price tag.

Go with this simple rule of thumb: If it's expensive and comes advertised in a full-color glossy brochure, it must be better quality. So anything locally developed, free, in-house, or offered at a discounted rate must be suspect.



6 Never listen to your teachers when they tell you what they need.

Collect survey data about their goals, but ignore the results. They don't know what they need. Either make all the decisions yourself or make none until the last possible second. Laissez-faire is a great approach to planning professional learning.

7 Don't participate in the activities you require teachers to attend.

Wander through once or twice, but always excuse yourself for something "more important" so teachers get the clear message that you don't need to understand what you're expecting them to implement.

9 Take an all-or-nothing approach to conferences and workshops.

They're either universally good (and should be the sole focus of our time, energy, and budget) or bad (and no one should ever be allowed to attend any of them).

10 Keep an eye open for the next big thing.

Jump on every next big thing you read about in a journal, see at a conference, and hear about from a colleague. If it worked anywhere else, it should work in your school, too.

8 Get the most for your money and time.

Herd the whole faculty into the gym for a three-hour presentation by a speaker with no costly follow-up, coaching, or small-group discussion over time. Teachers will be inspired by the expert's high-quality slide presentation. Assume that teachers will be able to implement new strategies and methods based on a single, expert-driven learning experience.

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

I confess to a degree of perfectionism that used to prevent me from having much-needed conversations for fear of saying the wrong thing or saying it wrong. These days, I just say it and let the chips fall where they may. I encourage you to do the same. It will probably go better than you imagined. And if there are chips, well, keep your shoes on, and no one will get hurt. — Susan Scott

By Deli Moussavi-Bock

Perfectionism is tough conditioning to shake, and yet doing so is vital to our growth and development. As I grew up, I thought that if I couldn't achieve perfection at something, then I probably shouldn't do it. I was often on the sidelines, working on perfecting any number of endeavors, while others hopped on the bandwagon, fell off, got back on, and seemed to be having a blast in the process.

Moussavi-Bock

One of the best things I've done is to take a comedy improv class. I quickly learned that being rehearsed — perfect — aiming to look good or be intelligent would take me down. The instructor urged us to celebrate our failures, and we did so in order to risk, take action, be present, and move beyond the crippling internal critic.

Getting past our internal critic — changing conversations with ourselves to encouraging — is essential to good professional development. The chances of innovating are nil when our brain switches into know-it-all mode.

PERFECTIONISM VS. HIGH EXPECTATIONS

What's the difference between perfectionism and high expectations? It's the difference between the teacher, supervisor, or parent who shuts us down with blanket criticism and the one who maintains high expectations with encouragement: "I believe in you, and I know you can do better. Keep practicing."

If I set high expectations for myself, give my best effort, and tell myself it's OK to make mistakes, I will continue to try, move forward, and make progress. Not judging my mistakes will make it more likely that I'll be transparent about my mistakes and not shame others for theirs.

LEARNING IS DERAILED

Sometimes we're so focused on preparing for a perfect outcome that we forget to create the conditions where learning and growth can thrive.

During a workshop I facilitated, educators shared their ahas on how perfectionism derails learning and development. The message is: "Don't take a risk, don't get it wrong, don't show me something until it's perfect." The message that nothing's ever good enough leads to expected failure.

Practice is about gradual progress, not perfection. Send the message of perfection, and people will shut down. They will move quickly toward anything *but* accountability. They try something once, it doesn't work, so they abandon it. Instill the will and skill in people to practice and change behavior.

Psychology Today's website describes perfectionism this way: "For perfectionists, life is an endless report card on accomplishments or looks. A one-way ticket to unhappiness … . What makes perfectionism so toxic is that while those in its grip desire success, they are most focused on avoiding failure, so theirs is a negative orientation" (*Psychology Today*, n.d.).

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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. Columns are available at www.learningforward.org.

Imagine an organizational culture or a management style under the grip of perfectionism.

Anxiety and fear of failure do not make for a productive learning environment. Instead, they create:

- **Shame and shutdown:** People feel set up to fail rather than to succeed.
- **Rigid, all-or-nothing mindset:** This mindset leads to either having to be the best or not try at all.
- **Cover-your-rear culture:** Because a culture of rigidity inspires blame, we need to point the finger elsewhere.
- **Never-good-enough, hide-your-work culture:** The perception is that nothing's ever good enough for this school, this culture, so why bother giving our best or getting other perspectives on our plans?
- **Cruelty to ourselves and others:** Perfectionism causes us treat ourselves poorly. We often treat others the way we treat ourselves.
- **Procrastination:** We'll wait until we know how to do it the "right" way.
- **Living life by script:** Rather than engaging in life and learning as they happen, we wait for the scripts in our heads to unfold and are disappointed when they don't.

In *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell (2008) says that those who reach success often don't achieve it overnight, but through continued effort. The seemingly sudden successes of the cases he cites happened not by inherent talent but with hard, continued work and the motivation to practice, practice, practice.

In school settings, children watch adults, learning by example. Jennifer Drapkin writes in *Psychology Today*, "Perfectionists feel as though the world expects them to be impeccable. In a classroom setting, these are the children who won't try new things because they're scared of looking foolish. … Since they need to appear perfect, so-called 'socially proscribed' perfectionists almost never ask for help. They keep problems to themselves and let them fester" (2005). Adult professional learning should further the growth and learning of students, not stifle it.

CHANGE CAN BE MESSY

As my improv instructor said, let's celebrate failure. At a conference I attended, speaker Elliott Masie said failure is necessary to learning and innovation. Encourage people to speak up about their fears. Motivate and encourage others to strive harder. Create support and understanding that change can be messy, scary, and, most of all, that change comes about gradually, then suddenly. Development is a continuum. Celebrate small wins on the way.

A behavioral psychologist once told me that the most effective way to change our mindset is to engage in new behavior. Remind yourself that the tone and tenor of the conversations you have is how you create your environment. Are you motivating or discouraging people? Ask yourself, "Are my conversations instilling a will to learn or shutting it down? Are they punitive or driven out of learning, encouragement, and a genuine desire for progress?"

Our success, individually and collectively, comes down to a willingness to practice and persist, occasionally look foolish, and push forward regardless. Isn't that what we also want to model for students?

Let's equip people with the skills in professional learning and then create a supportive environment of learning, cooperation, collaboration, and a willingness to learn from each other. That encourages people to practice, take risks, and learn from their mistakes. This is good modeling for students as well. After all, learning assumes we don't have all the answers.

I recently watched a video interview between a teacher and principal. At first, the teacher's voice was tentative, seeking approval. In the course of the interview, she began to realize that her principal was learning as much as she was, which gave her permission to not have all the answers. The teacher's face lit up, her body language changed, and her eyes sparkled. Permission to learn brings joy and energy.

If you're a perfectionist, be present to the impact your internal conversations have on your relationship with yourself and with others and the impact these conversations have on your overall relationships and results.

Here are some things to consider, from an article called "Managing perfectionism":

- Set standards that are high but achievable.
- Enjoy the process, not just the outcome.
- Recover from disappointment quickly.
- Don't be disabled by anxiety and fear of failure.
- View mistakes as opportunities for growth and learning (Center for Creative Counseling, n.d.).

Author and poet Maya Angelou says, "Success is liking yourself, liking what you do, and liking how you do it." This doesn't mean there isn't room for growth. Quite the opposite — this gives us room to grow.

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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.

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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.**
- 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.**

Fort Wayne initiative strengthens leadership

Principals and assistant principals in Fort Wayne Community Schools recently participated in a three-day institute focusing on building rigor in student instruction, data collection, and professional learning.

The institute is part of a two-year commitment Learning Forward has made to Fort Wayne to strengthen the district's central office as they support principals and school leadership teams. Frederick Brown, Learning Forward's directory of strategy and development, and Kay Psencik, senior consultant for Learning Forward, worked with Fort Wayne Community Schools as the district team developed the institute's agenda and activities.

"I saw a lot of evidence of Learning Forward's influence throughout this institute," Brown said. "First, the district has integrated KASAB in the district's overall improvement framework. They have asked principals to look beyond the knowledge their staff might gain but more at the skills and behaviors they demonstrate.

"Second, the Standards for Professional Learning and the district's own definition of professional learning, which Kay and I helped them write, are serving as the foundation for all of the district's professional learning work. We are definitely making a difference here in Fort Wayne, and some of this story will be told in our upcoming *Becoming a Learning System* book."

This work, which is being externally evaluated by Arroyo Research, is part of Learning Forward's Leading Forward initiative. The initiative is built on these assumptions:

- School leaders play a critical role in school reform efforts. There are virtually no documented instances of successful school turnarounds without a highly effective principal;
- Since districts create the conditions in which school leaders work, any effort to support principals must also focus on strengthening the effectiveness of central office; and
- Principals don't work in isolation. They distribute leadership in order to scale and sustain effective practices.

Fort Wayne has committed to a multiyear engagement with Learning Forward because the district is serious about creating a system of supports for its school principals and their teams.

For more information about Leading Forward and the efforts in Fort Wayne, email frederick.brown@learningforward.org.

book club

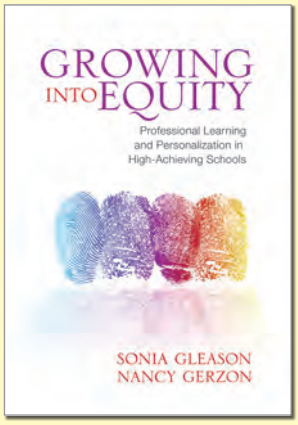
GROWING INTO EQUITY
Professional Learning and Personalization in High-Achieving Schools
By Sonia Gleason and Nancy Gerzon

What makes a Title I school high achieving, and what can we all learn from that experience? Professional learning and leadership that supports personalized instruction make the difference, as captured in the authors' research.

This book shows how four outstanding schools are making individualized learning a reality for every teacher and student. The common thread is the commitment to ensuring every student achieves. Readers will find:

- Guidance on identifying obstacles to equity within your school;
- Background that builds a case for personalized learning;
- Four case studies that show the values, professional learning practices, leadership, and systems that have helped schools transform learning; and
- Templates for creating team-based professional learning that expands individualized instruction in every classroom.

Discover new approaches for individual, team, and whole-school professional learning that support personalized learning, drawn from schools that are leaders in overcoming challenges and creating opportunities.



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 (for U.S. mailing addresses). 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.

Successful change requires leadership at all levels

on board
JEFF RONNEBERG

Educators across the country are in the midst of implementing the Common Core. I wonder what the results of these efforts will be in three to five years. Will we see systemic changes in our schools?

Historically, we have learned that, no matter the industry, most change efforts are not effectively implemented, and there is often little success in transforming personal practices or systemic actions and results.

Why is change so hard?

According to Lee Colan and Julie Davis-Colan (2013), "It's not that our intentions are bad; quite the contrary. … The problem is that most of us don't stick with it long enough to permanently change our behavior and get the results we want."

In a 2005 *Fast Company* article, Alan Deutschman emphasized the difficulty of change when he cited a study by Dr. Edward Miller at Johns Hopkins University. You would think an individual who has heart disease resulting in bypass surgery would change his or her eating habits and exercise. Yet, Dr. Miller found, "if you look at people after coronary artery bypass grafting two years later, 90% of them have not changed their lifestyle."

The good news is that, despite the difficulty of change, there are schools across the country that have navigated their journeys successfully. Whether the change you are engaged with is the Common Core or another initiative, professional learning must be at the core. Ultimately, if the adults are not learning, the students will not learn.

I know that if the staff in our district are to effectively implement significant initiatives, it is my responsibility to create the systemic conditions that provide the time and resources necessary for teachers and staff to engage in learning. I need to model learning while creating a compelling case for change and improvement. I need to foster a culture of reflection that results in people seeing how their unconscious mindsets might influence their practice.

As a leader, I can't do it alone. It takes leaders at all levels of the district. One example would be Westwood Middle School, which has taken strides in personalizing professional learning based on the unique needs of its students. While the school is part of a larger system, staff know they need to look carefully at where their students struggle to know what they need to learn. When I walk through the school, there are conversations happening at all levels — the 7th-grade math teachers examining data together, or the continuous improvement coaches talking one-on-one with teachers to help them improve specific lessons. At every level, these leaders are taking responsibility for aligning their learning — and their resources — to attain better results for students.

The school-based leaders and learners in my district have helped me understand that successful change requires leadership from all levels, continuously adapting our efforts to ever-changing influences, bringing coherence and alignment to our efforts.

•

Jeff Ronneberg is president of Learning Forward's board of trustees.

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Colan, L.J. & Davis-Colan, J. (2013). *Stick with it: Mastering the art of adherence.* New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Deutschman, A. (2005, May). Change or die. *Fast Company.* Available online at www.fastcompany.com/52717/change-or-die. ■

TAKING MEASURE

Here is how the work Learning Forward has done over the past year aligns with the organization's strategic priorities.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1:
LEADERSHIP AND PRACTICE

Learning Forward develops educator practices to lead effective professional learning.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS:

- Leadership sessions at the conferences help build capacity at all levels in districts.
- E-learning courses with the highest attendance (SMART Goals, School Leadership Teams, and Coaching) were directly aligned with this priority.
- Many *JSD* articles focus on specific skill development as well as provide models from a range of school contexts and positions.
- Learning Forward continues to widely disseminate the Standards for Professional Learning.
- Consistent messaging that integrates the Standards for Professional Learning throughout all channels drives home core themes.
- Meetings like the Leadership Reception and the New England Thought Leaders Meeting are examples of the way Learning Forward engaged educators and exchanged information that demonstrates leadership and effective practice.
- Newsletters and blogs help readers learn from successful professional learning leaders.
- Foundation awards showcase practitioners building individual and team capacity to lead professional learning in local contexts.
- Learning Forward has been supporting Fort Wayne Community Schools using elements of the Leading Forward curriculum. The main goal has been to build capacity of the district office to support principals and school leadership teams.
- Learning Forward is seeking AdvancED special designation for learning schools. The Standards Assessment Inventory and Innovation Configuration maps are being embedded within their accreditation and school improvement processes.
- Learning Forward recently acquired the intellectual property rights to the College Board Leadership Institute for Principals. Learning Forward joined forces with the institute team to apply for a School Leadership Program federal grant to take this national model and implement it in Milwaukee Public Schools.
- Affiliates extend core messages of Learning Forward.
- Learning Forward's Center for Results works with clients throughout the country to improve educator practice.
- Monthly Connect e-newsletter offers resources and learning opportunities to members and nonmembers.
- Learning Exchange offers an online community for educators to collaborate virtually.
- Twenty-two schools are members of the Learning School Alliance. Schools design customized professional learning plans based on the Standards for Professional Learning that support resolution of a problem of practice aimed at improving student performance.
- The Learning School Alliance curriculum has a section devoted to leadership strategies in collaborative settings.
- During Learning School Alliance summer sessions, principals participate in role-alike sessions to hone their leadership skills.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2:
IMPACT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Learning Forward supports educators to assess and report the impact of effective professional learning.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS:

- The iPD Showcase at the 2012 Annual Conference highlighted technology that can be used in accountability.
- IC maps help educators examine current practices and actions related to implementing the standards.
- Several *JSD* articles have tools or self-assessments to help educators begin to measure practice.
- Weekly communication team meetings ensure that all channels share current information about trends and current events in the field and the programs Learning Forward provides to impact professional learning and student success.
- Articles in the newsletters and blog have helped readers learn about assessing impact.
- The Learning Forward Academy is developing a plan to assess impact during the program and after members graduate.
- Learning Forward is working with My Learning Plan and LoudCloud to develop a system to measure the impact of individual and school activities.
- Learning Forward Foundation's Planning & Evaluation Committee wrote a feature for *JSD* to highlight a scholarship winner's story and impact.
- Annual Awards program recognizes the exemplary work of individuals, teams, and programs.
- SAI2 assesses the quality of professional learning.
- Learning School Alliance members take the Standards Assessment Inventory and use the results to monitor and adjust their customized professional learning plans.
- LSA summer sessions devote a day to developing SMART goals and linking these to student performance.
- LSA schools receive one-on-one coaching on analyzing SAI data and using it to impact practice.
- Through a grant from WestEd and the Doing What Works project, LSA facilitators created special tools to assist LSA schools in choosing appropriate professional learning.
- An outside evaluator is assessing

LSA specifically on its impact and effectiveness as a school improvement tool.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3:
ADVOCACY AND POLICY

Learning Forward engages educators and stakeholders in developing and implementing policy for effective professional learning.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS:

- Conferences offer high-quality advocacy sessions.
- Several states and school systems have adopted the latest Standards for Professional Learning in policy to drive effective practice.
- The Transforming Professional Learning Kentucky project's online community and live webinars facilitated shared development and learning.
- Transforming Professional Learning briefs offer rationale and recommendations for policy.
- Transforming Professional Learning policy workbook outlines process for examining and improving professional learning policies.
- Many blog postings are geared toward different stakeholders. Blog postings on teacher evaluation (and related pieces in other publications) have potential for influence.
- Conference keynotes such as Anne Bryant engage both educators and stakeholders in the role policy has on effective professional learning.
- Newsletters help readers learn from multiple practitioners engaging in developing and advocating for policies that support effective professional learning. Two examples:
  - *The Leading Teacher*, Fall 2012, shows how teachers can influence local policies by making the case for professional learning.
  - *The Learning System*, Winter 2013, features teacher-led teams from the New York State United Teachers Association. These teams designed a new teacher evaluation system that includes meaningful dialogues and plans for continued professional learning.
- The Academy Alumni Group is a network for sharing successful strategies and challenges in changing local practices and policies.
- Embedded within the Academy program is a requirement for participants to develop their own teachable point of view, which will be used to help them advocate for effective professional learning.
- The Transforming Professional Learning II project is providing state education agencies, affiliates, and districts with resources that will help them develop policies and practices that support more effective professional learning.
- Implementing the Common Core website pages offer resources and tools to assist the implementation of effective professional learning.
- One of the LSA course-of-study modules addresses how to advocate to a school's central office administration for effective professional learning.
- Learning Forward is working with members of the U.S. House of Representatives to strengthen the definition of professional learning in federal law (Elementary and Secondary Education Act).

LEARNING FORWARD CALENDAR

Sept. 1-30: Learning Forward board of trustees election.

Sept. 15: Manuscript deadline for April 2014 *JSD*. Theme: The future of learning.

Oct. 15: Manuscript deadline for June 2014 *JSD*. Theme: The fundamentals of professional learning.

Oct. 16: Last day to save $50 on registration for the 2013 Annual Conference in Dallas, Texas.

LEARNING FORWARD FOUNDATION

2013 Grant and Scholarship Winners

The Learning Forward Foundation has announced its 2013 grant winners. These awards provide recipients opportunities to develop their expertise in leading professional learning within their schools and districts and to engage them in the broader Learning Forward community for ongoing professional collaboration and support.

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

LEARNING FORWARD PRINCIPAL AS LEADER OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SCHOLARSHIP

The Learning Forward Principal as Leader of Professional Learning is awarded to **Darlene Miller**, principal at Karns Elementary School, Knox County Schools in Knoxville, Tenn. This scholarship supports the principal through Learning Forward Annual Conference participation and individualized executive coaching as she converts good performance in her school to a new level of superiority of academic learning of staff and students. This scholarship honors the memory of Don Richardson.

CHIDLEY FUND ACADEMY SCHOLARSHIP SCHOOL-BASED

This year's winner is **Bethanne Augsbach**, teacher at Woodland Elementary School in Monroe Township, N.J. This award is for educators working with large populations of underserved students and is awarded to a school-based teacher leader/coach who aspires to a role of leadership in the arena of professional learning. It provides funding to support participation in the Learning Forward Academy.

CHIDLEY FUND ACADEMY SCHOLARSHIP DISTRICT-BASED

This year's winner is **Amy McWhirter**. She is a new teacher induction coordinator in the Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools in Tennessee. The Chidley Scholarship is for a district leader responsible for professional learning at the system level. It provides funding to support participation in the Learning Forward Academy.

LEARNING FORWARD TEAM GRANT

The Learning Forward Team Grant is awarded to the team at Wayland Public Schools in Wayland, Mass., under the leadership of **Karyn Saxon** and **Tricia O'Reilly**. The grant supports teams (grade-level, school, and district) to advance Learning Forward's purpose.

THANKS TO GRANT AND SCHOLARSHIP READERS

The Learning Forward Foundation Board would like to thank the following people for participating in the scholarship and grant review process: Charles Clemmons, Vicky Butler, Susan Patterson, Tiffany Coleman, Vaughn Gross, Jody Westbrook Bergman, Betty Ann Tults, Mike Murphy, Jody Wood, Janice Bradley, Bill Sommers, Linda Crain, Sharon Roberts, Barry Olhausen, Janice Shelby, Glee Moore, Gaye Hawks, Vicky Duff, Dale Hair, Ronni Reed, Lenore Cohen, Amy Colton, Betty Dillon Peterson, and Linda Munger.

PATSY HOCHMAN ACADEMY SCHOLARSHIP

Jeff Fox is an instructional math coach in the Corpus Christi Independent School District in Texas. The scholarship is in honor of Patsy Hochman, who was killed by a drunk driver in 2008. Hochman's husband established the scholarship to continue her legacy. The scholarship provides funding to support participation in the Learning Forward Academy.

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

- Learn more about grants and scholarships: www.learningforward.org/foundation/scholarships-and-grants.
- To make a donation online, visit https://commerce.learningforward.org/commerce/donate/.
- Visit the foundation's table near registration to learn more about 2014 scholarships and grants available.

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FOUNDATION

TIME FOR LEARNING

www.learningforward.org/learning-opportunities/webinars/establishing-time-for-professional-learning

In this webinar, Learning Forward Senior Advisor Joellen Killion leads a discussion of a seven-step process for establishing time within the school day for professional learning. Topics focus on assisting district and school leaders in developing, vetting, and implementing recommendations for increasing collaborative learning time for educators, and then evaluating the effectiveness of the change. Participants examine schools and districts that are developing innovative ways to ensure effective professional learning becomes part of their school culture and explore tools and strategies included in the recently released report, *Establishing Time for Professional Learning.*

BEHIND THE SCENES

www.learningforward.org/who-we-are/staff

Do you have a question about your membership, or are you interested in writing an article for one of Learning Forward's publications? Do you need more information on conference or e-learning opportunities? Check out the staff page to learn who is responsible for the many programs and services Learning Forward offers. Use the contact info provided — we want to hear from you.

CROSSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

www.learningforward.org/publications/tools-for-learning-schools

Educational technology leaders view the so-called "digital divide" as nonexistent and urge schools to integrate technology across the curriculum. In the Summer 2013 issue of *Tools for Learning Schools,* two technology advocates share six lessons for successfully integrating technology into schools using resources at hand. Tools in this issue explore how to apply these six lessons into your school or district and include a survey to gather staff and educator perspectives on integrating technology into learning. Use the results to find trends and to help with implementation planning.

ADVOCATE FOR EQUITY

http://bit.ly/19tqYXZ

Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh writes about why Learning Forward invests resources in influencing policy:

"The quality of our children's education shouldn't be determined by whether they are instructed by tempered radicals or are fortunate enough to be in a school or system that understands, embraces, and practices continuous improvement. This luck of the draw is no way to ensure equity for all children.

"If students go to school in a system that is in survival or compliance mode, they need their state and federal policymakers to pass policies — and provide related structures and resources — that ensure that all teachers and education leaders are operating with the best practices possible and equal to those in other districts."

Create learning that unlocks the potential of Common Core standards

We have a rare opportunity. The U.S. Department of Education heard practitioners' concerns and offered educators a reprieve from the high stakes attached to the new assessments (see p. 9). Educators have more time to get Common Core implementation right so that students are better prepared to demonstrate what they know and can do on forthcoming assessments. How educators use the next year could well be a determining factor for the future of professional learning.

In the most recent *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher*, 93% of teachers reported they already possessed the knowledge and skills to implement the new Common Core standards (MetLife, 2012). At the same time, only two in 10 are "very confident" the Common Core standards will prepare more students to be career- and college-ready. Another finding is telling, however. Teachers with the deepest knowledge of Common Core have the highest confidence in the standards. This leads to the question: Can teachers really understand the standards' potential unless they have experienced professional learning that promotes deeper understanding?

With more time for implementation, we must be intentional about how we reach more educators.

•

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

The challenge is how to reach key educators with the substantive learning essential for transforming practice and beliefs. Here are four suggestions for accelerating this agenda:

OPEN YOUR DOORS.

Reducing teacher isolation has long been a goal for improving professional learning. In many places, communities and trusting cultures help to advance a collaborative improvement environment. However, many schools have a long way to go. Implementing Common Core gives us a chance to examine our practices because so many educators are facing the same situation. Let's lay out the challenges, engage colleagues, practice new strategies openly, and make mutual commitments to better teaching and learning.

LEARN LIKE YOU WANT YOUR STUDENTS TO LEARN.

Launch professional learning like you would approach a second-language immersion school experience. Ensure that all practices replicate the kinds of experiences you expect educators to implement. Engage teacher leaders, instructional coaches, principals, and supervisors in designing, implementing, supervising, coaching, and assessing the learning experiences we expect teachers to implement in classrooms. Invest in leadership and build ownership and commitment to the conditions, processes, and assessment of results of professional learning.

THINK SYSTEMIC.

Be thoughtful in planning how to reach key stakeholders ultimately responsible for successful schoolwide or systemwide implementation. Identify a theory of action and state your reasons for adopting it. Avoid one-shot workshops or large statewide conferences. Instead, consider ongoing facilitated networks, virtual and face-to-face academies, and facilitated learning teams engaged in continuous improvement cycles.

TELL THE STORY.

Report the results. How have teachers' attitudes changed? How have practices improved? What are examples of system and school accomplishments as a result of the investment in professional learning? Develop accountability measures for additional investments in professional learning and report on the results. If the positive story does not get out, a negative story will capture the public's attention.

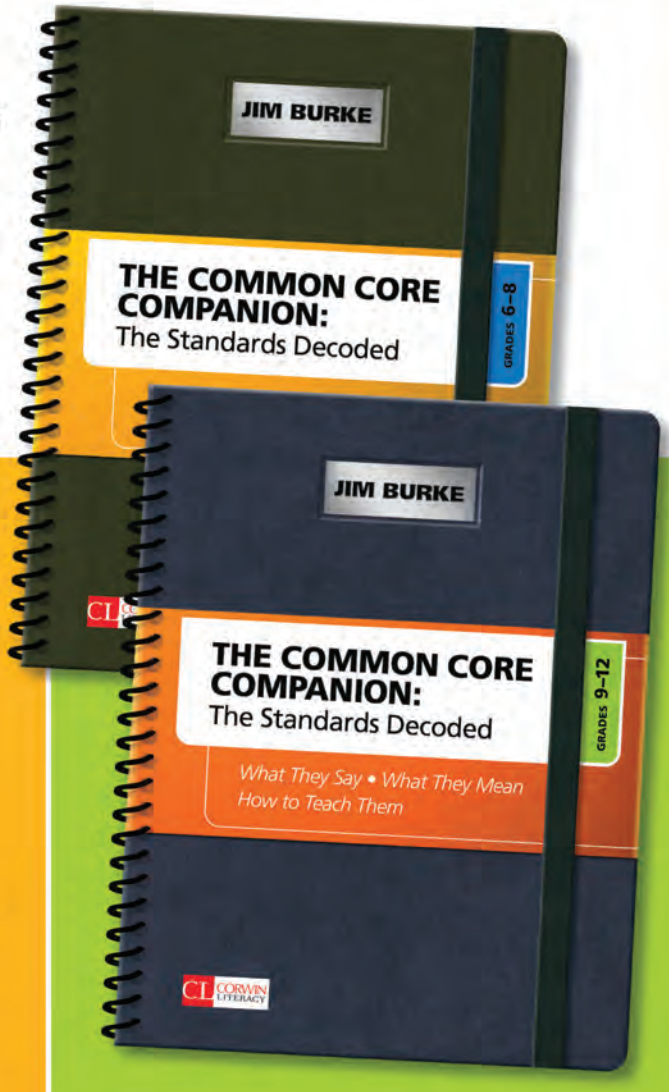
With Common Core in the spotlight, key stakeholders have the perfect opportunity to demonstrate the impact professional learning can make on educator practice and results for students. Let's make the best of it.

REFERENCE

MetLife. (2012). *MetLife survey of the American teacher: Challenges for school leadership.* New York, NY: Author. ■

"I love what Jim Burke has done to make the standards less threatening and more useful for teachers."

—Grant Wiggins



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