

JSD

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

Examining IMPACT

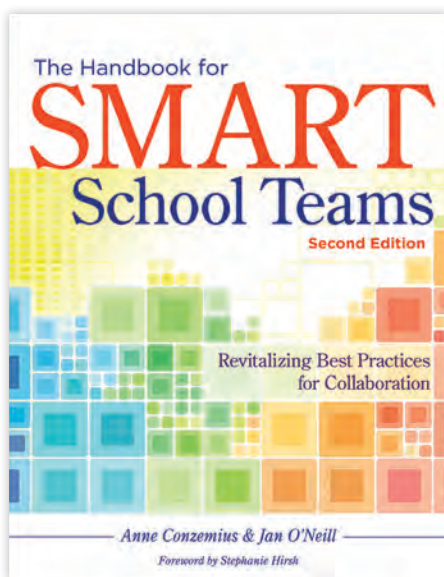
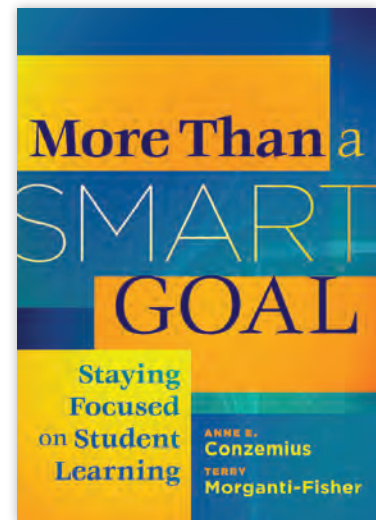
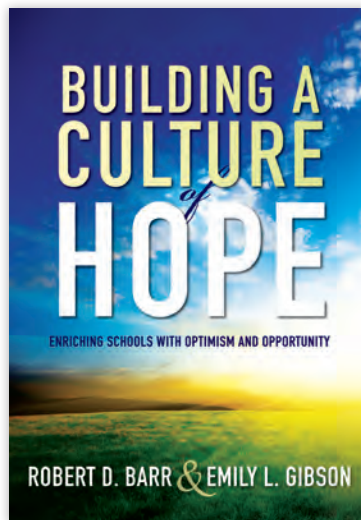
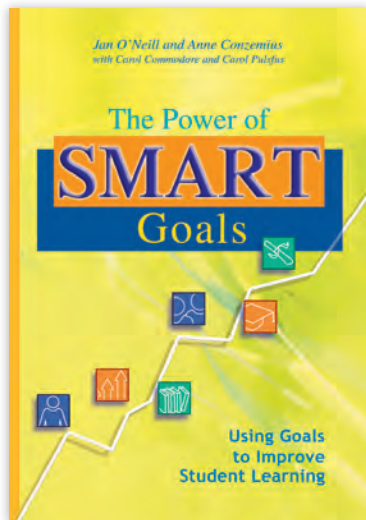
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Make the case for coaching with policymakers p. 48

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theme EXAMINING IMPACT

OCTOBER 2013, VOLUME 34, NO. 5

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Learning Forward
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All educators have a role to play in emphasizing impact

I recently looked in on a Facebook exchange among some teacher friends. It was the day before their students were to arrive for the new school year, and they were bantering about the opening day of schoolwide professional development sessions.

When one of them commented, dripping with sarcasm, that she wouldn't want to oversleep and miss something important, the others responded with knowing laughter, Facebook style.

These same teachers spent the previous week in collaboration, examining benchmarks and preparing for improved instruction, and I hope that they found that useful. However, as Dennis Sparks pointed out in a recent blog post,

hope isn't a strategy. "Hope must be supported by stretching goals, robust plans, professional learning, and strong teamwork," he writes (Sparks, 2013).

This issue of *JSD* emphasizes the importance of professional learning's impact. Impact doesn't happen through hope, or skillful facilitation, or great use of data, or the best learning designs supported by technology. All of those elements can help professional learning

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

to have an impact, and many are essential to it. Yet on their own, many factors we'd consider critical to effective professional learning aren't enough to ensure it achieves its ultimate purpose — changing educator practice and improving student learning.

Impact isn't just about measuring results after professional learning. Impact must be a consideration from the very beginning, from the time that system leaders determine the resources available to the planning stages and through the implementation phase. This notion is the foundation of the Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011), which Learning Forward Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh explores in greater depth on p. 10.

Practitioners have varying degrees of power or responsibility in determining the big picture for professional learning, but regardless of where they sit, all educators have a role to play in emphasizing impact. Here are examples:

Teachers can ask for data in different ways that help them understand student needs; articulate what they need most; offer feedback on what is most — and least — useful to them; gather student data in informal ways to respond to new instruction.

Teams can review the goals they set together and determine progress; talk about data that puzzles them; share student assessment ideas and challenges; ask school leaders for more support where they need it.

Instructional coaches can offer feedback in new ways; review goals and progress often; help teachers and teams understand the Standards for Professional Learning more deeply; bring in new sources of information about learning that has an impact.

School leaders can tie individual and team goal setting to school and system goals; provide more time and resources for data analysis; monitor progress in a range of formal and informal ways; share progress publicly.

System leaders can ensure sufficient resources; hold high expectations for professional learning; provide standards-based learning for school leaders; offer evaluation support formally and informally; integrate professional learning systems with other systemwide school improvement efforts.

To achieve real impact, it isn't enough to move from one-size-fits-all opening days to team-based learning and planning. I hope that this issue of *JSD* helps you move in that direction. Or, rather, I planned that this issue would do so — and I'd like to hear from you about your progress.

REFERENCES

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

Sparks, D. (2013, September 3). 5 contradictions that reveal essential principles of teaching, learning, and relationships [Blog post]. Available at <http://bit.ly/1dM4lAj>. ■

COACHES' CONNECT

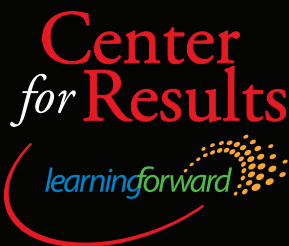
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USING STUDENT DATA
If You Build It Will They Come?
Teachers' Online Use of Student Performance Data
Education Finance and Policy, Spring 2013

How much and in what ways do teachers use computer-based student test data? To find out, author John H. Tyler analyzed online activities of teachers in one midsize urban district between 2008 and 2010. Using weblogs and focus groups with teachers, Tyler examined the extent and nature of teachers' data usage, finding low teacher interaction with web-based pages that contain student test information that could potentially inform practice. Blogger Matthew Di Carlo, writing about the findings in Tyler's report, says, "This reveals the complicated web of factors that must be in place if teachers are to get anything out of data systems like this one."

<http://bit.ly/18HOD2J>
<http://shankerblog.org/?p=8614>

IMPROVING TEACHER PRACTICE
High-Quality Professional Development for Teachers: Supporting Teacher Training to Improve Student Learning

Center for American Progress, July 2013

The Center for American Progress looks at professional learning — what states and districts are doing that is working and what policies are in place to support effective teacher training. The report explores features of professional learning linked to improvement, effective teacher evaluation, and implementing the Common Core State Standards. Recommendations include strengthening evaluation, developing resources on standards and assessments, and reshaping the school day to make time for collaboration.

<http://bit.ly/166HEfZ>



ATTRACTING TALENT

The Invisible Lever:
A Profile of Leadership and Management Talent in Education

Education Pioneers, June 2013

The education field is a rewarding place for America's top talent, including young people and professionals of color, according to this report. Managers — many with backgrounds and professional degrees outside of education, such as business, finance, law, and technology — who have worked in education view it as a worthwhile, fulfilling place to apply their knowledge and skills. A survey of 1,300 professionals in a broad range of education leadership roles finds that many education organizations, including school districts and charter management, are willing to offer significant management opportunities to young leaders that are on par with, and often exceed, those in the private sector.

www.educationpioneers.org/invisiblelever

INNOVATIVE STATE MODELS

Promoting Data in the Classroom:
Innovative State Models and Missed Opportunities

New America Foundation, June 2013

This report explores the use of student achievement data to improve classroom instruction, highlighting examples from two states, Oregon and Delaware, of federally funded, state-driven efforts to equip teachers with the tools they need to use student data. It also provides a glimpse of the two states' challenges and successes throughout implementation of their projects and explores the federal policy implications of each project. The Oregon and Delaware data projects provide models of successful projects and show how those or other programs could be expanded to promote data use in more classrooms around the country.

<http://bit.ly/13JcryS>



INTERACTIVE LEARNING**InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards***Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013*

CCSSO has created a free interactive guide for educators to learn about the InTASC standards, the history behind them, and their application. Using a cloud-based e-reading platform called the LumiBook, the guide includes video links and resources designed to help teachers use the InTASC standards and progressions in their professional learning. Teachers can observe video clips of teacher performance aligned to the InTASC standards, use a tool to assess where current practice lands on the skills spectrum and to define steps for continuous improvement, and upload and share strategies for addressing problems of practice tied to each standard.

www.lumi-book.com/intasc.php

**COMMON CORE****Year 3 of Implementing the Common Core State Standards: State Education Agencies' Views on the Federal Role***Center on Education Policy, July 2013*

Based on a 2013 survey of 40 Common Core State Standards-adopting states, the Center on Education Policy examines state education agency officials' views on the federal role in implementing the standards. The survey shows that, although a direct federal role in implementing the Common Core State Standards has been

controversial, a majority of states in the survey support legislative and/or regulatory changes to the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act to help them with implementation. The report also addresses the issue of within-state opposition to standards and finds that the majority of survey states do not anticipate their state's decision to adopt the standards will be reversed, limited, or changed in 2013-14.

www.cep-dc.org

**NEW ZEALAND SURVEYS****Research Report: Professional Learning and Development***New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association, 2013*

Two surveys conducted by the New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association in May 2013 show that teachers and school leaders agree current professional learning is inadequate, piecemeal, and incoherent. Teachers want more professional learning, preferably with colleagues from other schools, led by an expert facilitator with valuable and trusted external expertise. Teachers also want a variety of professional learning and, while they value in-depth professional learning community-based work, they also value workshops that enhance their knowledge in particular areas. Teachers and school leaders agree on the need for more locally trusted, officially sanctioned, effective professional learning.

<http://bit.ly/1aobuo7>

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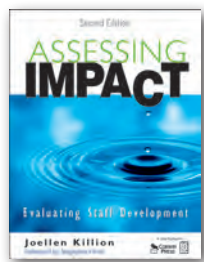
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ASSESSING IMPACT:
EVALUATING STAFF DEVELOPMENT
(2nd Ed.)
Joellen Killion, 2008

Comprehensive in scope, this accessible resource guides teams through a step-by-step process for planning and conducting effective evaluations of professional development programs. Learning Forward Senior Advisor Joellen Killion uses practical language to show educators how to evaluate professional development programs beyond the surface level, looking critically and analytically at their work to discover what is effective and what is not in order to refine their work, strengthen the benefits of staff training for participants, and improve overall student achievement.



Available in the Learning Forward Bookstore,
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CHECKLIST

FOR TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION PLANS

An important step in evaluation planning is to identify the activity's key components. Knowing what evaluation resources are necessary and available guides choices about the evaluation's scope. The following checklist can serve as a reminder about the key components of a good evaluation plan and help planners keep track of which components are in place and which are not.

The plan includes a logic model clearly indicating:

- Key inputs necessary for the professional development to succeed.
- Professional learning necessary to achieve intended interim outcomes and intended final outcomes for teachers.
- Measurable and/or observable professional learning outcomes for teachers and, as appropriate, learning outcomes for students.
- A timeline for completing key professional learning and attaining interim and final outcomes for teachers and, as appropriate, students.

The evaluation plan clearly describes how the evaluation will address each of the following questions about the professional development activity.

- Did the activity take place as planned?*
- The activity included the intended participants.
 - All of the participants engaged in all of the professional learning.
 - All of the professional learning took place as planned.
 - All of the necessary materials, personnel, and equipment were available.
 - The plan explicitly describes data collection activities, including specifying appropriate instruments and a reasonable timeline for data collection, for addressing each of the parts of this question.

What were the participants' perceptions of the relevance and usefulness of the professional development?

- The plan explicitly describes data collection activities, including appropriate instruments and a reasonable timeline, for addressing this question.

Did the professional development achieve the intended outcomes specified in the plans for the activity and as reflected by measurable and/or observable indicators?

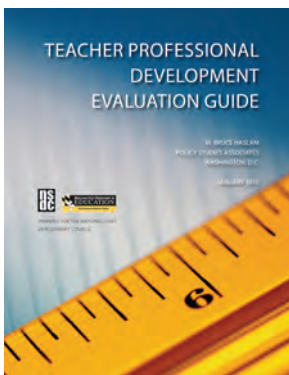
- The plan explicitly describes appropriate data sources (e.g. reports from systematic observations and/or similar activities, local and state assessment results and student work samples for students of teachers participating in the professional development) for each of the indicators, appropriate data collection procedures, and a reasonable timeline for addressing this question.

Source: Haslam, M.B. (2010, January). *Teacher professional development evaluation guide.* Oxford, OH: NSDC & Maryland State Department of Education.



TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION GUIDE

M. Bruce Haslam, January 2010



This guide offers succinct recommendations for more frequent and more rigorous evaluation of teacher professional development to improve both the quality of professional learning and its results. Developed originally under contracts with Harford County Public Schools and the Maryland State Department of Education, this report assists schools and districts to evaluate the impact of teacher professional development on teaching practice and student learning. Learning Forward supported modifications to the resource guide to make it useful for schools and districts in all states and beyond.

Available to download free at www.learningforward.org/docs/pdf/evaluationguide.pdf.

5 QUESTIONS TO INFORM EVALUATION PLANNING

These five questions cover the various factors planners need to consider in designing an evaluation. Because the answers to these questions will define the basic parameters of the evaluation, the evaluation team should come to consensus about them before moving forward.

Failing to address these questions in advance invariably results in superficial and incomplete data collection and analyses and missed opportunities to identify ways to make improvements and learn about the payoffs of teacher professional development.

Similarly, retrofitting an evaluation plan and data collection on professional development that is well underway, or even complete, limits data collection opportunities and generally makes it difficult to tailor the evaluation to the professional development in meaningful ways.

1. Should the activity be evaluated?
2. What are the key elements of the professional development that will be evaluated, and what assumptions hold these elements together?
3. Who is likely to be interested in the evaluation, and what do they want to know about the professional development?
4. What resources are available to support the evaluation?
5. Who will work on the evaluation?

Source: Haslam, M.B. (2010, January). *Teacher professional development evaluation guide.* Oxford, OH: NSDC & Maryland State Department of Education.



THE IMPACT FACTOR

WHY WE CAN'T NEGLECT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EVALUATION



By Stephanie Hirsh

Demonstrating the impact of professional learning has never been more important. Educators are implementing rigorous content standards and assessments and experiencing new evaluation systems, even as they navigate a sea of other challenges and resources for professional learning are on the chopping block.

For educators to be successful in ensuring that students are college- and career-ready, the support school systems provide must include high-quality professional learning. But without indications that professional learning has an impact, why would school systems continue to invest in it? And how can educators stay committed to lifelong learning that requires their own investment of time and energy if they don't see an impact on what they do each day?

Agreement among decision makers and advocates about professional learning's purpose and role is essential to determining its impact and ensuring continued investment in it. The most effective strategy for improving the performance of educators and students is professional learning, and professional learning's primary purpose is to do just that.

Professional learning is most effective when it is part of a comprehensive system focused on improving team, school, and system performance as well as the performance of individuals. In such a system, all educators take responsibility for

all students. Educators are building better learning institutions for all of the learners within, be they adults or students.

STANDARDS EMPHASIZE IMPACT

The foundation and guidance for evaluating the impact of professional learning can be found in Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011). Connecting professional learning to changing the knowledge and skills of educators and improving student outcomes is at the heart of the standards.

The Standards for Professional Learning guide the planning and implementation of educator learning that makes a significant difference for institutions, educators (teachers and administrators at all levels), and students. The diagram on p. 12 shows the relationship between adult learning and student learning when professional learning is standards-based.

Note that the arrows in that diagram move both ways. If changes in student results are not as expected, then professional learning has to change. This process requires constant monitoring to assess impact and change practices to improve results.

Tying professional learning to outcomes is explicit throughout the standards, but especially in the Data, Implementation, and Outcomes standards.

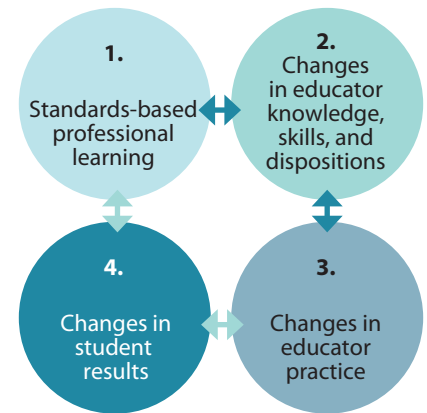
In the Data standard, educators determine what student, educator, and system performance data are available to guide the planning and evaluation of professional learning. They consider the implications and value of both quantitative and qualitative data. They use the data to

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND STUDENT RESULTS

1. When professional learning is standards-based, it has greater potential to change what educators know, are able to do, and believe.
2. When educators' knowledge, skills, and dispositions change, they have a broader repertoire of effective strategies to use to adapt their practices to meet performance expectations and student learning needs.
3. When educator practice improves, students have a greater likelihood of achieving results.
4. When student results improve, the cycle repeats for continuous improvement.

This cycle works two ways: If educators are not achieving the results they want, they determine what changes in practice are needed and then what knowledge, skills, and dispositions are needed to make the desired changes. They then consider how to apply the standards so that they can engage in the learning needed to strengthen their practice.

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



guide planning, improvement, and assessment.

Two critical components of the Data standard are to assess progress and to evaluate professional learning. When educators assess progress, they monitor implementation of their learning on an ongoing basis. They look, for example, at student work (qualitative data) to understand how their modified lessons influenced student understanding. Based on what they find in those student examples, they adjust their instruction and consider what else they need to learn to strengthen their teaching.

This monitoring is frequent, intentional, and based on short- and long-term goals (quantitative) for student learning. In high-performing systems, the process is part of a collaborative continuous improvement cycle, where teams with shared concerns set goals together, learn together, and periodically review progress together.

Within the Implementation standard, systems and educators emphasize the support required to sustain learning over the long term to achieve results. Part of that process requires the deliberate use of feedback. In effective learning systems, school and district leaders build in structures to clearly define expectations for educators and systematically give feedback and guidance to improve progress.

Working alongside educators, they determine the benchmarks and evidence that will demonstrate growth. Such systems also provide continued support to those leaders to ensure they have the skills to offer feedback that sustains learning over time.

While each standard begins with the words “Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students” to emphasize the connection between adult and student growth, it is the Outcomes standard that defines this concept in detail.

Equity is achieved when educators focus on similar outcomes and hold all students accountable to high standards. Effective professional learning addresses both educator performance standards, often set by states as prerequisites for initial and advanced licensure as well as evaluation, and student outcomes standards, such as the Common Core State Standards

or Principles and Standards for School Mathematics from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

Outlined within educator performance standards is what effective educators need to know and be able to do to promote student growth and support other educators. Student outcomes standards describe the specific knowledge and skills students must master in order to progress in their education. These expectations provide guidance to what educators must understand deeply to ensure all students are successful.

The Standards for Professional Learning and the guidance they provide lay the foundation for an effective professional learning system that demonstrates improvement and results. Aligning professional learning to the standards will help educators document impact by:

- Keeping them focused on what is most important.
- Telling them whether they are on the right track to achieve their goals.
- Giving evidence to reassure those responsible for investments in professional learning.

BUILDING AN EVALUATION PLAN

Isolating the effectiveness of professional learning from other factors that promote school and individual improvement is challenging. Most school systems and schools lack the research capacity and time necessary to determine that a particular professional development activity produced a specific performance outcome. Documenting whether professional learning is achieving its intended outcomes is not a simple matter, but that’s no excuse for neglecting its evaluation.

Decision makers need useful data to make informed judgments about the results of professional learning. In most cases, sophisticated research methodologies are impractical and not the answer. Instead, school system and school leaders need resources and tools that fit with the realities of their work environments and enable them to gain greater understanding about whether professional learning is solving their problems, improving their school, team, and individual performance, and helping



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DATA COLLECTION Use this table to gather evidence to support a professional learning plan.

SCHOOL GOAL					
	What knowledge and skills do we need?	What practices and behaviors will we see?	What evidence (including student performance data) will demonstrate growth?	Where are we starting (baseline)?	What is our end-of-year achievement according to student performance data and other evidence?
Teacher goals					
Student goals					
TEAM GOAL					
	What knowledge and skills do we need?	What practices and behaviors will we see?	What evidence (including student performance data) will demonstrate growth?	Where are we starting (baseline)?	What is our end-of-year achievement according to student performance data and other evidence?
Teacher goals					
Student goals					
INDIVIDUAL GOAL					
	What knowledge and skills do we need?	What practices and behaviors will we see?	What evidence (including student performance data) will demonstrate growth?	Where are we starting (baseline)?	What is our end-of-year achievement according to student performance data and other evidence?
Teacher goals					
Student goals					

more students to achieve standards.

Most educators responsible for professional learning focus their attention on the organization and content of a learning experience and don't make an effort to understand either what educators learned from their experience or how they will apply their learning to change practice or improve student outcomes. However, as the Standards for Professional Learning outline, these questions — what do educators need to learn, and what will they do with their learning — are the cornerstone of a professional learning evaluation plan.

Here is a framework for developing and implementing an evaluation plan meant for practitioners to be adopted or adapted for assessing the impact of professional learning. Ed-

ucators may choose to collect different data or ask different questions depending on their role in planning, implementing, engaging in, or assessing the learning.

DEFINE AND COLLECT EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

Determine a goal for student growth. Examine the quantitative and qualitative data available about student achievement. It is preferable to have peers who share responsibility for the same or similar group of students conduct the data examination and goal setting together. Then consider the times where progress toward the goals may be naturally assessed. These may include daily, weekly, six-week periods, or other assessment opportunities.

Set educator performance goals. Study and determine the



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precise behaviors the educators will learn and apply to promote accomplishment of student goals. Be able to articulate them for supervisors and coaches so that when they observe in classrooms they will be able to document the use of the new behaviors as well as give feedback on application.

SEEKING EVIDENCE

Read Stephanie Hirsh's column on p. 76, where she writes about the power of storytelling as educators look for evidence of progress.

Establish educator learning plans. Refer to the Learning Designs standard. Determine how educators will gain knowledge and skills to achieve the new performance goals. At the same time, develop joint agreements on what the new skills look like in practice in the classroom. Determine a process for providing educators with feedback on implementation and guidance for improvement.

Conduct classroom observations to provide feedback on classroom implementation. Educators can turn to instructional coaches, supervisors, and colleagues to provide the information they need to determine if they are using the practices deemed necessary to improve student performance. They can videotape their classroom and use the video to promote their own self-assessment. Those providing feedback need training and support to ensure the feedback is presented in a manner that will have the intended impact. They need to know what they are observing and how to look for fidelity of implementation. Ultimately, this information contributes powerful data to inform educators and other decision makers regarding the value of professional learning.

Assess impact and determine next steps. Examine the data from student performance to determine if educators' actions have resulted in the desired student outcomes. If students have made the intended progress, then it will be time for educators to re-examine the data to determine the next set of goals as well as answer the next questions regarding their own goals and learning plans. If student success has not reached desired levels, educators will need to conduct additional assessment of their own practices and determine additional learning and support they may need to achieve their goals.

This framework is clearly aligned with Learning Forward's definition and Standards for Professional Learning. The differ-

ence is the emphasis in each step. Begin with the end in mind and draw attention to the impact data collected in each step. This information gives educators the information they need to assess the impact of their own investment in professional learning. When asked what difference it is making, educators will have the data and experience to make their own case.

The data collection table on p. 14 can become a part of the professional learning evaluation plan that educators may refer to when asked: What impact is professional learning having in our school or system?

SCHOOL AND SYSTEM SUPPORT

Assuming school systems and schools are definitive about how an educator's participation in professional learning should increase student performance — and if they aren't, why are they allocating significant resources to professional learning? — they need to determine whether and to what extent it does so.

Student performance data are among the evidence critical to planning and assessing professional learning progress. In making the link between student and educator learning, educators will need to collect or have access to data, whether that comes from results of teacher-made or standardized tests, observation of student performance, observation of students' classroom interactions, or samples of student work. School systems have a responsibility to improve educator access and understanding of this data.

Overall, the process is not simple. Many educators collaborate with multiple teams working simultaneously on multiple goals. Systems may have to invest in new technologies that allow educators to manage their various learning plans and hold the data that documents the impact of their efforts. Systems responsible for ensuring that educators have the support necessary to document their various learning journeys will have the evidence they need the next time they meet to discuss the impact of their professional learning investments.

Such a process has its own challenges: the time it takes, the knowledge and skills to plan carefully and analyze data, and the need for ongoing refinement of the process. However, this approach can inform and engage educators and help them better align their learning with that of their students.

While this approach is feasible and will provide a wealth of information most schools and school systems don't yet have, educators haven't leveraged tools and structures that might help to begin this work. Learning Forward is ready to collaborate with one school or school system to co-develop and refine such approaches. Who stands with us?

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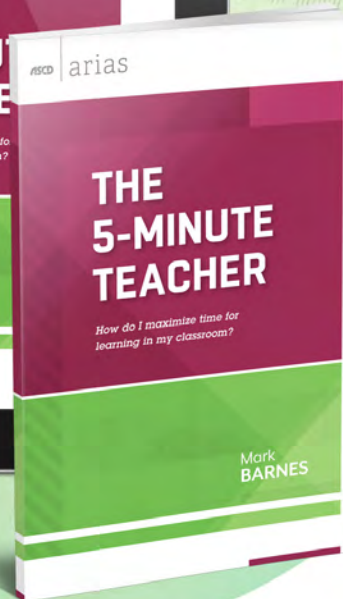
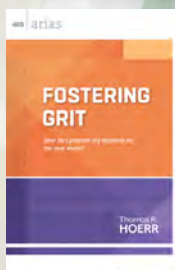
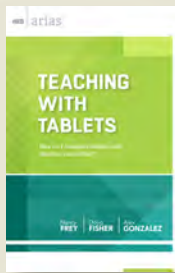
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RESOURCES TO GUIDE EVALUATION

For more specific guidance, educators can turn to *Standards Into Practice: School System Roles* (Learning Forward, 2013) and *Standards Into Practice: School-Based Roles* (Learning Forward, 2012). These books contain Innovation Configuration (IC) maps for teachers, coaches, principals, and district administrators for the Data, Implementation, and Outcomes standards. A sample IC map from the Data standard for three of these roles is available online at www.learningforward.org/publications/jsd. The books are available in the Learning Forward Bookstore, <http://store.learningforward.org>.

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RESEARCH TO MAP OUT
AN EVALUATION PLAN



By Sue Chapman, Debora Ortloff, Laurie Weaver, Winona Vesey,
Mary Anderson, Michael Marquez, and Melissa Sanchez

Evaluation of professional learning allows educators to assess the impact of their instructional improvement efforts. According to Joellen Killion, “Implementing evaluation as a natural component of staff development programs will encourage a systematic assessment of staff development that is based on results for students rather than services to educators” (Killion, 2008, p. 2). Yet evaluations that look only at results data and fail to consider cause or process data offer little opportunity to learn from our experiences or to understand the means through which the program effects were achieved (Reeves, 2010).

Educators need their professional learning work to result in improved student learning and a clearer understanding of how the specific actions taken by teachers and school leaders caused this learning to occur. This understanding enables education leaders to refine their professional learning work and to share their processes with others.

THE PROBLEM

When members of the school leadership team at McWhirter Elementary Professional Development Laboratory School in Webster, Texas, reviewed results of the state reading assessment in spring 2010, they were shocked. The school’s scores on this annual assessment had taken a sudden and dramatic drop from the previous year.

For the past several years, McWhirter Elementary’s achievement test results had gradually and consistently climbed in all subjects, and the leadership team had expected to see a similar increase in 2010. What had happened?

The team scoured available data but could not find a definitive answer. Teachers were equally puzzled and deflated. They had all worked so hard, and the evidence of improvement was strong in so many areas.

The school’s mathematics assessment results had continued to improve but were now noticeably higher than the school’s reading scores. The school’s culture was positive and collaborative. Teachers felt a strong sense of collective responsibility for the success of ev-

ery student. Teacher learning teams were self-directed and used the SMART goal process (Conzemius & Morganti-Fisher, 2012) to stay focused on improving student learning in support of schoolwide goals.

The leadership team began to ponder the factors that might have contributed to this sudden drop in scores. The school’s student demographics had shifted over the past several years, and the student mobility rate had increased. More than half of McWhirter’s students are English language learners, and some of these students were still demonstrating lower levels of English proficiency in upper grades.

Several years earlier, the school identified mathematics as a priority area and chose to allocate the majority of its professional learning time, funding, and human resources toward this area. Now school leaders wondered if they had overlooked signs of need in literacy instruction.

An analysis of classroom walk-through data revealed inconsistencies in reading instructional practices across classrooms. In addition, the school had experienced some faculty turnover several years earlier. Teachers who had joined the school community within this period had missed out on key professional learning initiatives.

The school’s leaders knew the students had the potential for high levels of performance in reading and teachers were capable of providing students with instruction that would help them to excel. They needed to know what to do differently.

The school community was eager to address the problem head-on by launching a new professional learning initiative designed to fix the problem. However, the leadership team needed a stronger understanding of the factors involved.

The team realized it had to sort through the tangle of intertwined dynamics to gain a sense of what Michael Fullan has labeled simplicity, “finding the smallest number of high-leverage, easy-to-understand actions that unleash stunningly powerful consequences” (Fullan, 2010, p. 16).

Team members needed to use their understanding of these dynamics to construct a theory of change, a mental model that “identifies the chain of causal actions that will lead to the intended results” (Kil-

lion, 2008, p. 46). This theory of change would help the team make informed decisions about the specific school improvement actions it should take, the best use of resources, and the benchmarks of progress to look for along the way to ensure that the school was moving in the right direction.

A thoughtfully constructed theory of change would allow the team to be proactive in designing a professional learning initiative and a plan for evaluating this initiative.

Although leaders recognized that they must invest the needed time in understanding the problem and designing a plan to address it, they also knew they could not continue business as usual while they figured out the answers to their questions.

Thus, exploratory action research (James, Milenkiewicz, & Bucknam, 2007) became the first step of the instructional improvement strategy. The leadership team would implement a small-scale professional learning initiative based on the best available information and study the impact of this initiative on teacher practice and student learning.

The team chose action research because team members needed a more complex picture of what was happening in reading instruction than standardized test scores could reveal. The results of the action research would inform their theory of change, long-term professional learning plan, and evaluation framework.

By adopting this strategy, the team would use this research study as a planning evaluation. According to Killion, “planning evaluations, those conducted before a program is designed, help identify the social conditions or needs that the program should address” (Killion, 2008, p. 134). This research project would help the school do just that.

THE PROCESS

McWhirter Elementary Professional Development Laboratory School is a partnership between Clear Creek Independent School District and the University of Houston-Clear Lake. As such, the staff has access to university faculty with expertise in educational research.

During the summer of 2010, McWhirter’s leadership team talked with the school’s university partners about the need to gain a deeper understanding of issues affecting the school’s ability to help students meet grade-level standards in reading. The group zeroed in on guided reading instruction in 1st and 2nd grades because walk-through data had indicated that practices were somewhat inconsistent across classrooms.

According to Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell (2006), recognized experts in the field of literacy education, small-group guided reading instruction is essential to maximizing students’ growth as readers. Richard Allington’s large-scale study of the practices of highly effective reading teachers (2002) found that teachers’ instructional expertise is closely related to student achievement in reading.

Allington concluded: “Effective teachers matter much more than particular curriculum materials, pedagogical approaches, or

‘proven programs.’ It has become clearer that investing in good teaching — whether through making sound hiring decisions or planning effective professional development — is the most ‘research-based’ strategy available. If we truly hope to attain the goal of ‘no child left behind,’ we must focus on creating a substantially larger number of effective, expert teachers” (Allington, 2002, p. 740).

McWhirter’s leaders believed that growing teachers’ expertise and skill in conducting guided reading lessons would have a direct and positive result on student learning.

To begin, teachers and leaders worked together to develop an Innovation Configuration (IC) map that articulated the specific instructional practices they wanted to build across classrooms. They used the article “Clarify your vision with an Innovation Configuration map” (Richardson, 2007) as a guide for crafting schoolwide standards for guided reading instruction. They began this process during a professional learning day in August 2010 but continued to discuss and refine the IC map over the next few months.

Next, the school hired an outside consultant to provide three workshop sessions to deepen teacher understanding of guided reading instruction. Each session included study of an aspect of guided reading and observation of a McWhirter teacher conducting a guided reading lesson.

The classroom observation was followed by debriefing and reflection on practices observed in light of the session’s content focus. The three professional learning sessions were scheduled months apart to allow time for teachers to try out and receive feedback on their implementation of the strategies studied.

Between sessions, the school’s literacy coach and two Reading Recovery teachers provided individualized coaching support for teachers as they practiced their new skills.

With these structures in place, the team designed action research study to examine the impact of the guided reading professional learning initiative on teacher instructional practices. The team gathered qualitative data about teacher practice from a series of classroom observations across the school year.

The guided reading Innovation Configuration map formed the basis of an observation protocol for classroom observations of guided reading lessons. The protocol drew on Carspecken’s (1996) suggestions for creating valid observation protocols in educational settings. Specifically, the protocol provided specific time sequences in which the observer examined aspects of the guided reading lesson.

The protocol required both objective and subjective note-taking in order to maximize understanding of classroom interactions. All of the researchers conducting observations were trained on the protocol by a university professor with expertise in qualitative research.

A team of three university faculty members and three school faculty members (instructional supervisor, literacy coach, and Reading Recovery teacher) conducted observations of each



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THEORY OF CHANGE FOR IMPROVING CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT DURING GUIDED READING

1. Group of volunteer teachers drafts an Innovation Configuration (IC) map for classroom management during guided reading. Once teachers review the IC map, the group makes revisions based on their suggestions.
2. Each teacher self-assesses his or her classroom management during guided reading time based on the IC map. An administrator conducts a nonevaluative observation of each teacher's guided reading instruction. The teacher and administrator meet to discuss the teacher's classroom management practices in relation to the IC map and decide on possible support needed to build effective classroom management practices.
3. Teachers who need or want support in improving their classroom management practices engage in a book study of *The Daily Five: Fostering Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades* (Boushey & Moser, 2006).
4. Teachers participating in this course receive coaching support and nonevaluative feedback focused on classroom management. Teachers observe management of literacy stations and independent reading in classrooms where these practices are effective.
5. Teachers' classroom management practices during guided reading improve and become more consistent across classrooms.
6. As a result of improved classroom management, best practices in guided reading are consistently implemented, timing of guided reading lessons improves, and student engagement in guided reading instruction is strengthened.
7. Student achievement in reading improves.

classroom in October, December, February, and April of the 2010-11 school year. School and university faculty with bilingual certification observed bilingual education classrooms.

During each classroom observation, an assigned observer watched three guided reading groups (below, at, and above grade level). The observers were counterbalanced to ensure that each teacher was observed by each observer at least once. At midyear, the team met and debriefed to make sure the protocol was effective and to provide peer checks to the research process.

At the culmination of the project, the data were uploaded into a software program that helped the team sort through the information and examine relationships in the data, then analyzed by one team member using a process known as the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The constant comparative method involves reading all data multiple times, comparing each piece of data to itself and the other data by developing themes to categorize the patterns that emerge in the data. The team then met and served as peer debriefers for the data analysis process.

FINDINGS

The results of the exploratory study were surprising. Team members expected the research to show that the school's guided reading instruction had become stronger and more consistent across classrooms as a result of the school's professional development efforts. This predicted outcome was confirmed. However, action research also revealed the following:

- Instruction differed between groups of students reading below grade level and students reading at or above grade level. Across classrooms, teachers employed fewer best practices when working with below-level groups. Teachers sometimes appeared to be less confident and enthusiastic when work-

ing with students reading below grade level. Questioning for critical thinking was stronger with groups reading higher levels of text.

- Teachers' classroom management of activities for students not involved in guided reading lessons affected teachers' implementation of guided reading standards, their efficiency in the timing of lessons, and the engagement of students in these lessons. Students were expected to participate in literacy stations or independent reading while teachers worked with guided reading groups. When students were not self-directed in these independent activities, guided reading instruction suffered.

NEXT STEPS

McWhirter's leadership team shared these findings with teachers in fall 2011 and asked for suggestions. During the 2011-12 school year, the team developed strategies for responding to these findings and a plan for evaluating the professional learning initiative that grew out of this process. Knowing the dangers of adopting too many professional learning foci at once (Reeves, 2010), the school looked for creative ways to address some needs through existing structures.

The leadership team chose response to intervention to improve guided reading support for below-level readers. This process allows McWhirter to tailor professional learning to the needs of each teacher as educators discuss student case studies and create personalized intervention plans for students. The team views response to intervention as powerful professional learning because it offers teachers differentiated, just-in-time learning about strategies to help students be successful.

The leadership team chose to address classroom management of literacy stations and independent reading as a pro-

professional learning initiative because of its critical impact on instruction and student learning. Together with teachers, school leaders constructed a theory of change for building strong classroom management practices during guided reading (see p. 22). This theory of change became the school's road map for designing professional learning and evaluation. It allowed all members of the school community to "see the connection between educator learning and student achievement" (Killion, 2003, p. 17).

Based on this theory of change, the leadership team formulated questions that it wanted to consider in planning professional learning and evaluating its impact (see box below). These questions examine the link between teacher learning and student outcomes to ensure that McWhirter promotes classroom practices that make a positive difference in student learning. The questions were used to decide which data to collect and to plan professional learning evaluation.

MODEL FOR STRATEGIC EVALUATION

Exploratory action research study provided valuable insights into the dynamics surrounding student progress. If McWhirter had not taken time to conduct this planning evaluation, the school would have overlooked important factors affecting student reading growth. McWhirter's teachers and leaders believe the needs revealed by this study are significant and that the professional learning plan and evaluation framework that grew out of this research will lead to increased student achievement.

Beyond that, the process of studying instructional practice with a research mindset has helped the staff appreciate the value of slowing down analysis of complex problems to take a deeper look at underlying causes. Collaborating with university partners gave McWhirter staff fresh perspectives on school improvement processes. This team effort helped the school resist the urge to take uninformed action and provided a model for strategic evaluation of its professional learning efforts.

Killion cautions, "When specific [professional learning] needs are not clearly articulated, a program's design may target perceived needs rather than real needs" (Killion, 2008, p. 134). Professional learning evaluations should gather data related to both the end results as well as the causes of these results. Exploratory

action research can play a valuable role in the evaluation process as a way of identifying factors that support desired outcomes.

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EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- To what extent are teachers implementing classroom management standards to support self-directed student behavior during guided reading time?
- In what ways do improved classroom management practices impact teacher implementation of guided reading standards, timing of guided reading lessons, and student engagement in guided reading?
- How do improved classroom management practices affect the rate of student growth in reading?

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CHECKS AND BALANCES

BUILT-IN DATA ROUTINES MONITOR THE IMPACT OF BOSTON'S TEACHER LEADER PROGRAM

By Jill Harrison Berg, Christina A. Bosch, Nina Lessin-Joseph, and Phomdaen Souvanna

Teacher leadership is not new to Boston Public Schools. Teachers in this district have always stepped up in formal and informal ways to assume roles that aim to improve teaching, learning, and school improvement.

As data team leaders, members of school leadership teams, grade-level leaders, mentors, and instructional coaches, teacher leaders have been recognized for making contributions to the improvement of teaching and learning in Boston (Education Commission of the States, 2005; Broad Foundation, 2006; Mourshed, Chijioke, & Barber, 2010). In 2009, when the Boston Plan for Excellence, Boston's public education fund, approached Boston Public Schools about collaborating to create a teacher leadership certificate program that could expand teachers' capacity for teacher leadership roles like these, attention to impact was paramount.

The partners felt it was important to provide professional learning that strengthened teachers' leadership skills while also paying attention to whether and under what conditions they were more successful in their roles. Since the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate program they were building was new and the literature on teacher leadership development scant, it was important to build a learning system: a series of routines that could regularly inform decision making about program content, process,

and implementation in context.

By incorporating time and tools to review data at multiple levels of the program, the certificate program team — comprised of program staff as well as teacher leaders who are course facilitators — has not only been able to monitor the effectiveness of this professional learning model, but has also constantly refined its process for ensuring participants succeed in their roles, facilitators lead effective learning experiences, and the larger program design meets the needs of Boston's reform plan. As a result, the more the program team inquires into what teachers are learning, the more the program learns from teachers (see figure on p. 25).

TAPPING INTO EXPERIENCE

In Boston, as in most districts today, teachers are increasingly being called on to assume additional nonteaching responsibilities that serve school improvement goals. Recognizing the critical needs these roles serve, teachers agree to take on these roles — frequently with little more than token compensation or recognition — yet they may or may not have the skills to carry out these important responsibilities effectively.

And why would they? The skills for leading a team to create and use data, providing colleagues with growth-oriented feedback on instruction, or leading a focused meeting of adults who may not want to be there — to name just

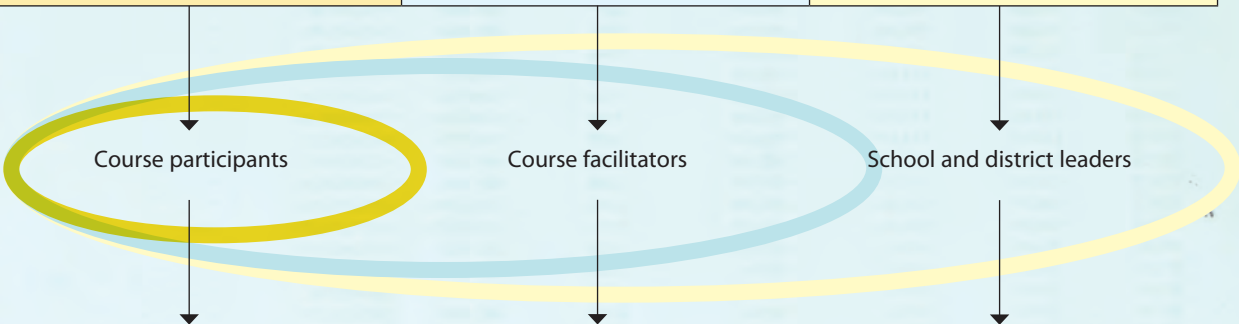
BOSTON TEACHER LEADERSHIP CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

WHAT THEY ARE LEARNING

What are the specific things the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate program wants to support participants, facilitators, and school and district leaders to be able to do?

SKILLS AND STRATEGIES FOR:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leading data use. Supporting instruction. Participating within shared leadership structures. Tapping the knowledge base of professional expertise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitation. Supporting adult learning. Stimulating professional learning that leads to changes in practice. Establishing a professional learning community. Building enriching professional connections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing teacher leader roles to address local goals. Creating time for teacher leaders' work. Clarifying or defining teacher leader roles and responsibilities. Communication and coordination routines.
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INSIGHTS INTO:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges faced by teacher leaders (logistical, intellectual, sociopolitical, etc.). What resources are needed. Picture of the work on the ground. Impact of the role on students, colleagues, and on career satisfaction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectiveness of course design. Utility and quality of our shared tool kit of materials. Better understanding of what's generalizable across roles and what's role-specific. Tool kit additions needed. Impact of facilitation role on personal and professional satisfaction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systemic needs and support needed. Resources needed. Learning what will be useful to share across schools. How schools perceive (and misunderstand) these roles. Tools needed for resource library. Impact on school culture.
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WHAT WE ARE LEARNING

What are the things the program team doesn't know or needs to know more about? What are the areas in which the program seeks to build new knowledge?

a few — are not traditionally part of teacher training. But they are teachable skills, and each teacher leader should not be left to develop these skills or reinvent new strategies on his or her own.

Boston benefits from a long history of teachers holding formal teacher leadership roles. Whether teacher leaders received training through past programs or grants or figured out what works on their own, they are a gold mine of human capital.

The Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate program tapped these experienced teacher leaders to design and facilitate graduate-level courses by providing support and a structure for them to become professional learning leaders who can help to expand leadership capacity in the district.

The courses are offered to other teacher leaders who hold leadership roles in the district. Participation is voluntary and comes with the added benefits of being able to earn graduate credit and to network with colleagues throughout the district. In the four years since the program began, more than 100 teachers have participated.

In the program design phase, the certificate program director and associate focused on two important measures of success. The first was the extent to which participating teacher leaders were able to successfully strengthen core skills identified as critical to their roles. A second measure of the program's success was the extent to which teachers felt their participation was improving their ability to have a positive impact on colleagues' teaching practice.

Thus, with key principles of organizational learning in mind, the certificate program team set out to build systems that would allow them to learn from the program's own evidence about how to help teachers build the skills they need for success in their roles. The team pursued "the deliberate use of individual, group, and system learning to embed new thinking and practices that continuously renew and transform the organization in ways that support shared aims" (Collinson & Cook, 2007, p. 31).

SYSTEMATIC DATA ROUTINES

To monitor the program's impact, the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate program uses four data routines: comparing pre- and post-course surveys, analyzing exit slips, reviewing online discussions, and looking together at student work, which in this case are course performance assessments. These routines support collaborative inquiry, shared ownership for the quality of the work, and learning at all levels.

Pre- and post-course surveys

Course participants complete pre- and post-course surveys in which they report on their perceived skill level relative to course competencies as well as their sense of satisfaction with and support in their teacher leadership roles. These surveys guide facilitators and directors in planning course instruction as well as evaluating the program.

The precourse survey results drive facilitators' planning, enabling them to select learning designs that capitalize on teachers' expertise while also addressing individual learning needs. When facilitators compare pre- and post-course surveys, they are able to identify what worked and what they need to adjust for next time.

The surveys simultaneously support the program director several ways. Surveys allow the director to monitor participants' skill growth at the close of each course and to make necessary adjustments at the program level. They also guide her response to facilitators' needs as professional learning leaders. She can provide facilitators with support or resources to better meet participants' needs.

In addition, these surveys have helped to shape course curricula. For instance, early survey responses revealed that teachers in the data course felt they were indeed learning to use data, but such knowledge influenced only their own classroom practice without effectively giving them skills to confidently lead others in data use.

The responses led the certificate program team to teach strategies for engaging others in data use more explicitly. The team also refined and reordered the core competencies of this course so that preparing a team for data use was introduced earlier in the curriculum and allowed participants to spend sufficient time and attention on this specific skill.

Exit slips

At the end of each course session, all participants complete an online exit slip that employs a framework aligned with Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011). Participants are asked to reflect on the quality of their experience in terms of course context, content, and process. This data shapes facilitator focus, participant learning, director decisions, and program plans.

The exit slips are important for facilitators' planning. As one facilitator described, "The exit slips not only helped us understand what was going on but led us to a focused effort to move forward in addressing participants' concerns." When exit slips revealed that the pace of a class was too slow, facilitators learned to pick things up. When participants reported that they still had questions about how to introduce a new tool to their teams, facilitators recognized that they could model this in class each time they introduce a resource. And when participants were challenged by conversations with colleagues, role-plays became a more frequent instructional strategy.

"It allowed us to look for trends and not make assumptions about the participants' learning or how the work was landing in their schools," the facilitator said. They were able to make informed decisions about adjustments necessary to be more effective facilitators.

One facilitator reflected on the value that the exit slips also have for participants: "By sharing a summary of the exit slips

COURSE ASSESSMENTS

Core skills, competencies, and performance-based assessments for the four core courses of the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate program.

CORE SKILL	CORE COMPETENCIES	PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENTS
Using data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding and analyzing data. Creating a data culture. Using data to inform decisions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a priority problem using multiple data sources, one analyzed in Excel. Analyze and address conditions affecting team engagement and culturally competent conversations about data. Lead team to create and test a hypothesis for a high-leverage change the team can make to address the priority problem and communicate results to three different audiences.
Supporting instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitating growth-oriented dialogue about instruction. Expanding colleagues' instructional resources and routines. Leading effective professional learning experiences. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Observe self and a colleague around a problem of practice, then analyze both and lead a conversation about the instruction. Identify, experiment with, and evaluate an instructional resource in support of the identified problem of practice. Plan, implement, and evaluate a professional learning experience.
Shared leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening unity of vision on a team. Managing an effective team. Understanding self and team as part of a system. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the level of trust and unity of vision on a team; implement a plan to strengthen them. Use knowledge of self and the team to identify and introduce routines for improving the team's process. Create a map illustrating the team's theory of action and its relationship to other relevant teams; initiate efforts to improve communication within the system.
Professional expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximizing professional expertise. Tapping into education's knowledge base. Taking action for instructional improvement. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cultivate conditions for tapping internal expertise and maximizing organizational learning around an instructional area of focus. Identify and evaluate professional literature relevant to the area of focus. Develop practical, research-informed recommendations to improve organizational policies or routines around the area of focus.

at the beginning of each class, participants were also able know they were being heard and to see what they have in common with others.”

Some facilitators have even used the exit slips as part of a summative reflective exercise, returning exit slips to participants before the close of a course to encourage reflection on their experiences as a learner.

The exit slips also support success at a program level. The program director is able to review these online responses remotely to oversee all of the courses, despite their being geographically scattered throughout the city. Without the online platform, effective quality control would require additional resources and energy or a more narrow program focus. The program director also regularly reviews the accumulated exit slip responses with attention to key themes and trends that can shape professional learning support for facilitators and thereby contribute to growing the professional learning leaders the district needs.

The data also has the ability to inform systemic decision making. At one of their quarterly reflection meetings, facilitators sorted the printed responses from exit slips into groups to better understand the factors that, according to participants, made it easy or hard to employ course-based knowledge in their professional practice. This exercise drove some program adjustments, but, as one facilitator noted, “it also allowed us to sort out what was in our control to be addressed and what was not.”

Issues that cropped up across all programs pointed to systemic issues that were beyond the scope of what the program could accomplish. This valuable data led to the development of new tools that have been shared with school leaders and district partners who are in a position to use them.

ONLINE DISCUSSION

Throughout each Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate course, participants engage in a shared, online, asynchronous

discussion of relevant literature. This allows for continuous engagement with course material while also yielding data with implications for participant learning, facilitator involvement, and program design.

Online discussion allows participants to take more time to consider how they will apply course content in their own context, invites them to report to the group when experimenting with new skills, and enables teachers at varied levels of mastery to engage at their own level. The discussion forum also supports the group to process and address issues outside of the face-to-face time or return to conversations that were initiated in class as needed.

Viewing the discussion as data allows facilitators to see which issues are most salient among teachers in their practice and then think critically about how their course facilitation

aligns with participants' needs and experiences. "As a facilitator, reviewing the discussion board helps me keep a pulse on the group and make necessary changes to the face-to-face agendas based on the group's needs," one facilitator reported.

Facilitators note that the extent to which participants are able to provide one another with advice, challenge, and responses online is also valuable data. In fact, teachers report that they feel the social capital they build in these courses is of high value to them and allows for greater impact of the work. In this way, data-driven inquiry leads to both indi-

vidual and organizational learning.

At the same time, the online discussion forum allows the program director to monitor program development. On one occasion, for example, analysis of the discussion forum led the director to question the necessity of an expensive course textbook. In another instance, it became apparent in an online discussion that dealing with difficult colleagues was a prominent issue. The director responded by working with facilitators to add a section to the curriculum on managing resistance, complete with articles, resources, strategies, and role-playing activities.

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS

In the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate program, each of the four core courses has clearly articulated competencies with aligned performance assessments and rubrics. These assessments facilitate feedback to participants about their skills relative to course competencies, while facilitators use the same information to shape their planning. All the while, the assessments support longitudinal reflection on program strategies and accomplishments.

Participants complete performance tasks that are reviewed

by facilitators and peers throughout the progression of the course (see chart on p. 27). The assessments are authentic indicators of whether teachers have the skills to do the work because they are the work.

"The assessments are just like the rest of the course — based in reality," said one participant. One facilitator noted, "One of the biggest strengths of the courses and the assessments is that they provide a safe working space for experimentation and learning."

Participants learn from the process of putting skills to use and reflecting with others what it means to perform these skills well. What they learn from each other during peer review also supports their success. As one teacher noted, "You can see in the assessments where a participant has tried and hit a roadblock and then what they did about it."

As professional learning leaders, facilitators also use the assessments as information to broaden their impact: "An added bonus for me as a facilitator is getting to read everyone's assessments, reading about real life action plans and ideas I can take to my own school and implement," one facilitator reported.

Because courses are backward-designed with the final assessment in mind, participants' challenges with the assessments may lead to program changes. In some cases, course content has been changed to better prepare participants for successful performance on the final assessments. This was the case in the data course, for which course developers had determined that effective data leaders needed to be able to demonstrate proficiency with the data analysis tools in Excel. Some teachers struggled with this piece, prompting course facilitators to further differentiate their approach to teaching Excel skills.

SUPPORTING LEARNING

The Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate program's work has been nurtured by data routines that are valuable for participant, facilitator, and school and district learning. At the same time, by examining what they are learning, how they are learning it, and how well, the program team is able to glean insights that are helpful for evaluating impact and supporting improvement.

At the outset, the goal was to create a program that would help teacher leaders strengthen skills they need for success in their roles. To date, program data confirm that the courses are making a difference, as the percentage of teachers who report that they perform the core competencies of the course regularly or confidently in their roles went from 25% before beginning a course on average to more than 75% after it. In addition, 95% of course participants indicated in post-course surveys that the course they had completed would improve their ability to have a positive impact on others' teaching practice, and almost 91% felt that the course would have a positive impact on their own teaching practice.

At the same time, the certificate program's homegrown col-

COMING IN DECEMBER

After analyzing feedback from participants, the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate program identified four conditions critical to teacher leaders' effectiveness. Read more in the December issue of *JSD*.

lection of tools and routines allows the program team to use data to inform organizational decision making at multiple levels — shaping the content of the program, informing the actions and roles of facilitators, and revisiting the structures as necessary to improve progress toward the program’s goals.

When such routines are in place, they compel the program team to not only ask, “What are they learning?” but also, “What are we learning that can help us build a better program? What are we learning that could inform others within the system about how to improve conditions for teacher leaders? What are we learning that can help improve teacher leadership practice beyond our own settings?”

With strong data routines around program evaluation, the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate program team is supporting learning at all levels.

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TEACHER
REFLECTIVE
TENDENCIES

STUDENT
EVIDENCE

INSTRUCTIONAL
COACH
WEIGHS
3 TYPES
OF DATA
TO GET

TRIPLE- STRENGTH FEEDBACK

By **Monica Boehle**

As an instructional coach in a large suburban, high-performing high school, I face many challenges in measuring the impact of my work with teachers on student learning. Our instructional coach model stresses teacher choice to not only work with a coach but also choose a topic on which to focus. This structure meets the needs of the teachers, but it is difficult to measure effectiveness because of the varying nature of the work.

I have tried many methods since the start of the pro-

gram five years ago and realized that, since there is not a direct line from coach to student, most measurements only attempt to capture the indirect link. Teacher surveys can be subjective, and standardized test scores often measure types of student performance that are not the focus of coaching work with teachers.

Changes in standardized test scores would reflect the cumulative impact of all professional learning, not just coaching, but, more importantly, results are not released often enough to give timely feedback to coaches.

Because coaching is unique and personal to each teacher, broad measurements do not accurately take into account the significant growth and change of both teacher



EVIDENCE OF SUSTAINED CHANGE

learning and student learning. Additionally, coaches frequently need just-in-time feedback from evidence to continually refine practice.

Weighing three types of data over time can provide more valid program evaluation and give coaches the timely feedback they need. These data include shifts in teacher reflective tendencies, the use of student performance as an indicator of success, and the contextualization of a change into long-term habits.

Use of all three of these measures can more accurately show the coach's impact on student learning. It may seem intimidating at first to track all of this information, but it can be embedded in routine reflections on coaching.

TEACHER REFLECTIVE TENDENCIES

Early indicators of the impact of instructional coaching are changes in a teacher's thinking over time. Reflection with a coach is central to the teacher's level of consciousness about his or her practice.

One case study is my work with Grant Jacobsen, a history teacher, which began with his wish to increase his use of formative assessment in class. As a result of our reflective conversation after the initial observation of a class, Jacobsen realized that he had only asked knowledge-level questions during the entire class, and only a handful of students responded.

When asked what he would measure on a formative assessment, he knew he didn't want it to be just on the facts. Not only did reflection change his formative assessment practice, it also raised his awareness about the need to ask more of his students.

This awareness has stayed with Jacobsen as he continues to refine his practice and has had a ripple effect in many aspects of his teaching. Jacobsen's response to coaching is typical of many people that I work with and is a testament to the power of reflection.

For a coach, it isn't important what tool is used to measure teacher reflection. It's important for the coach to use one or develop one himself. Some coaches like to use the simplicity of the four stages of competence learning model, which explains the process and stages of learning a new skill, with the understanding that teachers shift stages depending on the topic and expertise on that topic.

One tool that I found useful came from the book *Building Teachers' Capacity for Success* by Pete Hall and Alisa Simeral (2008). They created the Continuum of Self-Reflection: Coach's Model, which offers specific teacher characteristics at different stages that they called the unaware stage, conscious stage, action stage, and refinement stage.

This tool guides my thinking on actions that will help a teacher be more conscious in his or her instruction. In Jacobsen's case, he was both unaware and conscious and has shifted to action and refinement. If a coach does not move a teacher into more refinement, the changes that may or may not be made in the classroom are superficial at best.

Because each teacher is unique, there is not a set timeline for moving to the next steps. It may take weeks, or it may take years. Teachers also move up and down the continuum based on the topic. Shifts in consciousness come from the work that the coach and teacher do together.

Although many coaches think about this informally, formal tracking provides the coach more accuracy for re-



Monica Boehle

lection and serves as a useful predictor of student learning over time. Therefore, it offers useful data on the coach’s impact, especially when working with a large staff.

STUDENT EVIDENCE

The second type of data to measure coaching impact is student evidence. The coaching conversation must move beyond words to action. When working with a teacher on a change in the classroom, many times the focus is the planning of new activity or structure.

During this planning, evidence to indicate success of the change must be included. As coaches, we expect teachers to move beyond a casual feeling of the success or failure of a lesson to student evidence. We seek to answer the question, “How do

we know?” This evidence, in turn, provides the coach, teacher, and school with more tangible results of his or her work on student learning.

Part of a results-based coaching tool developed by the coaches in my district, adapted from the work of Diane Sweeney (2011), asks teachers to identify the current student actions or performance that they wish to change. This is best discussed with actual student evidence present in the conversation as well.

The student evidence grounds the work in reality — not just the perception of the teacher — allowing teachers to see students as individuals and removing some of the emotion teachers may be feeling. This evidence does not need to be limited to traditional data such as test or quiz performance.

In my work with Jacobsen, we have used student interviews, videotaped lessons, classroom observation notes focused on various topics, exit slips, student reflection, and student surveys to provide evidence of student growth. Once the initial evidence has been collected, Jacobsen and I ask: What instructional strategies or practices would move the students from the current state to the desired state?

Together, the coach and teacher plan the implementation of a new strategy, clearly articulate a specific goal, and plan how they will collect evidence of success. The use of pre- and post-student evidence increases the specificity of teacher reflection. It also helps the teacher see immediate impact of a change. If the goal is more long-term, these checks help show progress toward a larger goal, a key to motivating teachers to keep working on it.

EVIDENCE OF SUSTAINED CHANGE

Working with teachers on specific goals using student evidence is central. However, to measure long-term impact of coaching work, the change must be sustained, not just implemented once.

There is much data that could indicate that coaching impacts student learning when taken in isolated incidents. However, the work of a coach is to help a teacher make habitual changes over the long term, not quick fixes. This is also not something a coach should assume or simply hope will happen. As with any change, there is an initial period of focus and attention that declines over time. How do coaches help teachers make a change, then make it a habit?

During the reflective conversation with the student evidence, the coach asks questions that help teachers generalize their knowledge. By generalizing, teachers find the same concept echoed in different situations in the classroom. This, in turn, increases the teacher’s reflective tendencies when he or she sees the connections between ideas, not a series of isolated topics.

In Jacobsen’s case, he first jumped from topic to topic: formative assessment, classroom management, learning targets, engagement, small-group learning, and so on, not necessarily seeing the links between them. Working together, we created a vision of his dream classroom, deconstructed this vision into smaller action steps, and brainstormed the evidence of success.

By doing this, we kept the momentum going. We selected dates when more student evidence was collected, and reflected on, to show the sustained change. Together, we decided when to declare one change a habit in order to move on to the next piece.

Expanding the traditional coaching cycle of planning, action, and reflection kept us focused on the vision, and we celebrated the steps to achieving it. These conversations, anchored in student evidence collected over time, change habits into thoughtful practice.

It is difficult to find a simple documentation system, but through experimentation, I am working to refine my process. I modified the results-based coaching tool to include information about meetings, actions, and evidence to show growth on a particular focus (see p. 33). I keep a separate document for each person so that I can find continuity over time, even though there are often gaps between meeting dates. We provide background at the start of the coaching cycle to help us remember the context. As the cycle progresses, we include evidence of longitudinal data with agreed-upon collection dates. Using this organizer reminds me to purposefully seek evidence of impact on student learning whenever action is taken.

A COMPREHENSIVE PICTURE

It is challenging to measure a coach’s individual impact on student learning because the coach is part of the whole team of sustained professional learning. However, data on teacher reflective tendencies, student evidence, and evidence of sustained change provide a more comprehensive picture of the impact of a coach’s work. As a coach, I get an accurate, timely measure of my effectiveness from this structure of evaluation in order to self-reflect. My next step will be to find ways to share reports of success and change with other stakeholders within my school

Expanding the traditional coaching cycle of planning, action, and reflection kept us focused on the vision, and we celebrated the steps to achieving it.

RESULTS-BASED COACHING TOOL

Teacher:	Coach:
Focus or goal of coaching cycle:	Level of background knowledge or reflective tendency on this topic:
Why this focus?	
Observed student actions and other baseline data:	Current teacher actions or behaviors:

Date started	• Based on student actions, what instructional practices or strategies were determined by the coach and teacher to most likely impact student learning? • Next steps and meeting dates.	What coaching actions were implemented during the coaching work?	What is the evidence of change in teaching behaviors?	What is the evidence of student learning?

As a result of the coaching work, what instructional practices is the teacher using now on a consistent basis? (Include evidence and dates collected, agreed upon by coach and educator.)	What are the changes in reflective tendency on this topic? Evidence?

Adapted from Sweeney, D. (2011). *Student-centered coaching: A guide for K-8 coaches and principals*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. Used with permission.

district. The effort to meaningfully capture this information is challenging, rewarding, and significant as I continually seek to improve my work.

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COMPLETE *the* PICTURE

EVALUATION FILLS IN THE MISSING PIECES
THAT FEEDBACK CAN'T PROVIDE



By Chad Dumas and Lee Jenkins

The workshop is done. The presenter — whether consultant, principal, district office, or building staff member — is packing up his or her materials. The LCD projector is turned off. The computer is packed away. Lights are being turned off. It’s time to go home.

Staff in the session was fully engaged. Energy was high. Conversations were focused on the content. The temperature was comfortable. The food was good. The chairs were just right. All indications from the feedback point to one conclusion: The session was a success.

But how does anyone know?

How does anyone know that staff learned what they needed to learn? How does anyone know that the content of the day is now common knowledge among the attendees?

Two key indicators are feedback and evaluation. Feedback from participants is what the presenter uses to fine-tune his or her professional learning delivery. Evaluation provides organizers what they need to know in order to make decisions about future professional learning. “Do we want a long-term relationship with this consultant?” is the most important evaluation question and can only be answered sometime after the initial seminar is done. Both feedback and evaluation are necessary for measuring the impact of professional learning.

GATHER FEEDBACK

Feedback can take a number of forms. For example, the feedback form at right is not designed to evaluate the effectiveness of a seminar nor to give advice to those who organized it. The form’s sole purpose is to help the presenter do a better job at the next seminar.

Administrators also need feedback at the workshop. This immediate feedback — on aspects such as room temperature, snacks, boredom, breaks, restrooms, and so on — can help in preparing future professional learning. These issues should not

SAMPLE FEEDBACK FORM

At the conclusion of this seminar, I ask that you provide feedback to assist me in planning future professional learning. Often, seminar participants are asked to fill out an evaluation of the experience in order to assist administrators in decision making. Feedback, however, is different. It is to help me improve my seminars. Thanks.

1. What was the most helpful to you?
2. Did you notice any written or spoken factual errors? If so, what were they?
3. This seminar is designed to blend theory, practical advice, application, practice, and activity. Was the seminar balanced? Were there times when you were completely lost or bored? If so, when?
4. What one concept or idea was the most provocative?
5. What activity was the least helpful to you?
6. How committed are you to beginning the LtoJ process in your district, school, or classroom? If highly committed, where will you begin?
7. Where are you on this scale?
CONFUSION _____ CLARITY
8. How did I do in these four essential elements of successful seminars? (5 is highest, 1 is lowest score.) Place an X on each line.
 - Providing humor. 1 _____ 5
 - Speaking to your heart. 1 _____ 5
 - Giving you hope. 1 _____ 5
 - Providing enough help. 1 _____ 5

Source: Lee Jenkins.

Professional learning communities process and instructional framework HASTINGS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1. The foundation of learning team work is the pursuit of real answers to four critical questions:
 - What do we want students to know and be able to do? (Essentials)
 - How will we know when students know or can do it? (Common assessment)
 - What will we do when students *don't* know it? (Unit of study/ differentiation/intervention)
 - What will we do when students *already* know it? (Unit of study/ differentiation)
2. An essential is that which a student should know or be able to do at the end of each course or grade level.
3. Eight to 10 essentials are held in common and addressed by all teachers at that grade or content level.
4. Essentials should reflect, to the greatest degree appropriate, 21st-century learning, rigor/ relevance, Common Core, district curriculum expectations, state standards, and other curricular content or skills thought essential.
5. An assessment is a method of determining student learning. Examples include paper/pencil, performance-based, teacher observation, checklist, etc.
6. Formative assessments (informative), also known as assessments *for* learning, are ultimately given to direct future content and instruction.
7. Using data involves making instructional decisions to improve student learning and/or measure one's overall impact.

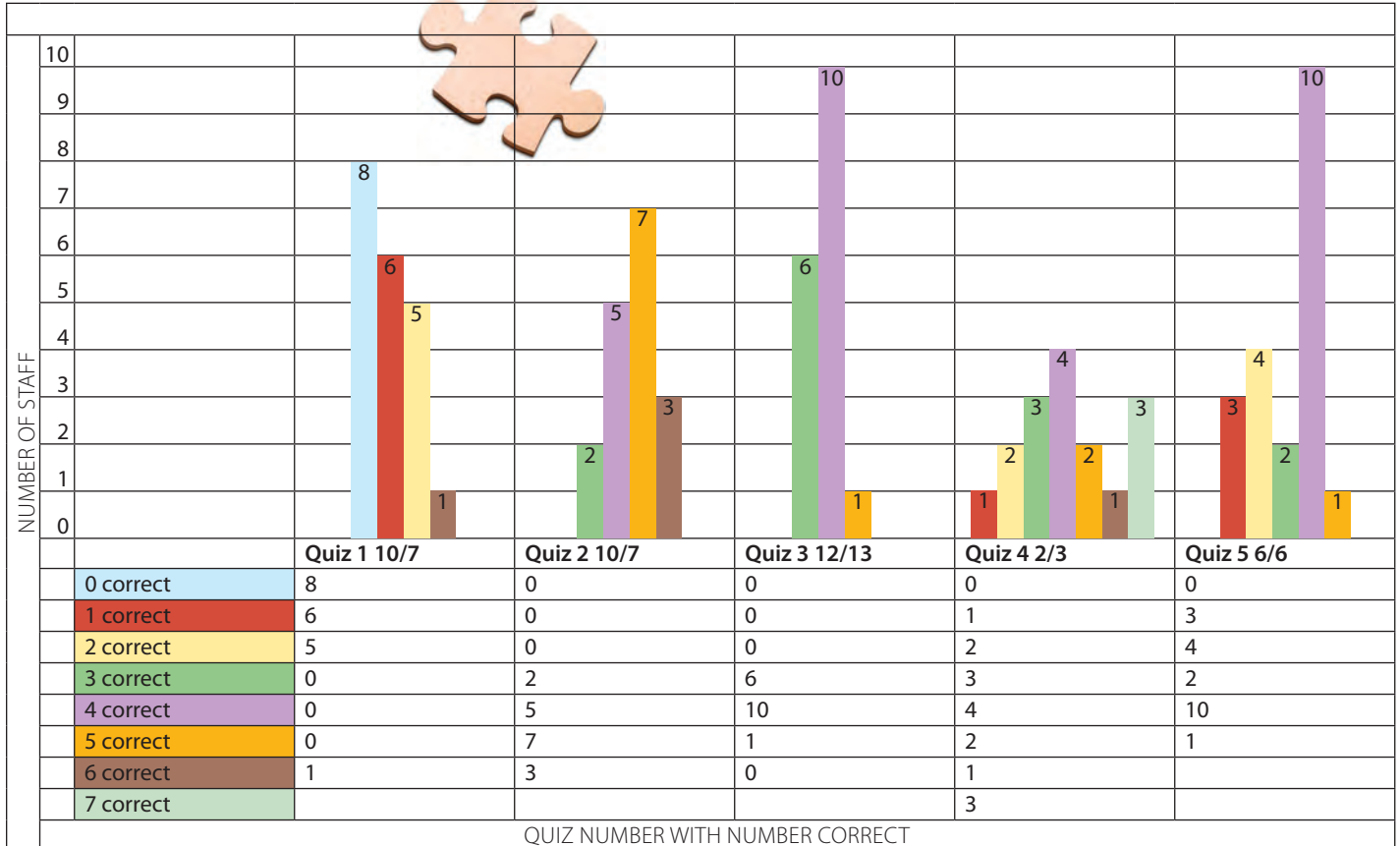


8. Formative assessments guide the development of units of study that should include differentiation or a system of interventions.
9. Summative assessments (summary), also known as assessments *of* learning, are given at the end of instruction to measure student learning. They are also used as program measures to determine what did and did not work.
10. There are five kinds of learning targets: knowledge, reasoning, skill, product, and disposition.
11. Knowledge targets tend to be factual and often include verbs such as know, list, name, identify, recall, etc.
12. Reasoning targets tend to involve the application of content to the real world and often include verbs such as predict, infer, classify, hypothesize, compare, conclude, summarize, analyze, evaluate, generalize, etc.
13. Skills targets are those performances that must be demonstrated and observed (heard or seen).
14. Product targets call for a student to create a product.
15. Types of evidence include teacher observation, selected response, extended written response, and performance assessment.

16. The type of evidence selected must match the kind of target desired.
17. The tool for gathering evidence must match the type of evidence and kind of target.
18. There are three stages to instructional (backward) design: Identify desired results, determine evidence, and plan learning experiences and instruction.
19. Robert J. Marzano's *The Art and Science of Teaching* (ASCD, 2007) is our instructional framework.
20. Our instructional framework is organized around nine plus one Design Questions from Marzano's *The Art and Science of Teaching* (ASCD, 2007).
21. Hastings Public Schools is focused on Design Questions One (Expectations) and Five (Engagement) for 2012-13 from Marzano's *The Art and Science of Teaching* (ASCD, 2007).
22. Specific actions that teachers can take for Design Question One (Expectations) include: Distinguish between learning goals and activities; write a rubric or scale for each learning goal; have students identify their own learning goals; assess students using formative assessment; have students chart their progress on each learning goal; and recognize and celebrate growth.
23. Specific actions that teachers can take for Design Question Five (Engagement) include: Games, goal setting, think time, physical activity, exit cards, authentic engagement, pacing, and relationship building.

Source: Hastings Public Schools.

SAMPLE LtoJ CHART



In 2010-11, school improvement leaders from Hastings Public Schools attended four workshops. The knowledge map consisted of 53 items on accreditation and data analysis. Seven items were randomly selected and quizzed at each session (twice on the first day, in the morning and afternoon). The data show attendees’

increasing knowledge over time. At the beginning of the workshop in October, almost all participants got two or fewer correct. By the end of that day, scores ranged from three to six correct. Over the course of the year, staff retained and grew their knowledge on the key concepts related to accreditation and data analysis.

be discounted — people who are cold are thinking about how stupid they were to not wear layers instead of absorbing the content of the workshop.

One option for gathering feedback is online, using sites such as TodaysMeet (www.todaysmeet.com). Once the administrator logs in, he or she lets participants know that they can post questions or comments throughout the day. The posts are available for all to see. Some questions or comments will be for the presenter, some for the organizers.

At a seminar in Marshall, Minn., co-author Lee Jenkins found that about 75% of the posts were questions he could answer immediately. Break and activity times provided the perfect opportunity to view the posts on a smartphone. The remaining comments, which concerned topics such as the projector, room temperature, and so on, were directed to administrators. All of

the comments and questions were addressed during the day and did not need to be placed on the feedback form — when it would have been too late to resolve any questions or concerns anyway.

SPELL OUT LEARNING GOALS

The ultimate outcome of professional learning is improved student outcomes. However, before that can happen, staff must learn new practices and behaviors.

All high-quality learning experiences begin with this basic question: What should participants learn? Whether the participants are students or staff, the question is the same.

Spelling out specific key concepts — what staff is expected to know and/or do by the end of a professional learning experience, whether over the course of a month, a semester, a year, or more — forms the foundation. When these key concepts are

shared with participants at the beginning, revisited throughout the learning experience, and emphasized at every opportunity, they become a map for the learning in which staff is engaged.

One example of this is the knowledge map (see p. 36) used by Hastings (Neb.) Public Schools. The map clearly identifies what staff should know as a result of all professional learning during the course of the year.

MEASURE LEARNING

Once the key concepts have been clearly identified, the next task is to measure learning and chart progress. One tool that does this is known as LtoJ.

LtoJ uses statistical sampling procedures to measure learning and chart progress over time. The number of questions is charted along the x-axis of a bar graph, and the number of participants along the y-axis. At the beginning of the learning experience, the graph resembles an L — lots of people know very little. As the learning progresses, the graphic progresses through the shape of a bell to become a J — a lot of people know a lot. See the sample LtoJ chart on p. 37.

The sampling procedure involves randomly selecting the square root of the number of key concepts for short quizzes. For example, there are 23 key concepts in the sample Hastings Public Schools knowledge map on p. 36. The square root of 23 is roughly five. Therefore, throughout the course of the learning experiences, participants are quizzed on five randomly chosen key concepts.

Data are collected at both an individual and group level and charted to show progress. Participants always know how they are doing as individuals and how the whole group's learning is progressing.

For a one-day seminar, data might be collected three times — at the beginning, before lunch, and at the end of the day. Over the course of a year, data might be collected at each meeting. Whatever the length of the professional learning experience, quizzes are given, data are collected, progress is charted, and, most importantly, instruction is tailored based on the results. The sample LtoJ chart on p. 37 is an example from Hastings Public Schools based on the results of professional learning over the course of a year on a knowledge map with 53 items.

EVALUATE IMPLEMENTATION

The more important duty of professional learning organizers is to evaluate implementation of the learning, which is the key to improving student learning. This information can only be gathered after a period of time. The feedback at the end of the seminar cannot inform leaders if enough learning for implementation has occurred. This sort of evaluation is what school systems often lack.

Sending out a questionnaire electronically to all teachers three months after the seminar will not help much. The results are the same as parent surveys: Only the most happy and the most angry answer.

To gather accurate evaluation data, randomly select teachers to interview. The number to interview, just as in selecting key concepts on which to quiz, is the square root of the total participants in the seminar. For example, if 60 teachers attended a workshop, interview eight randomly selected teachers.

At the beginning of the interview, ask each teacher to list the names of five colleagues. This list is for the teacher's use only and won't be collected or even seen by the interviewer. Then ask the following questions:

1. Did you make any classroom changes as the result of the seminar? How many of your five colleagues would answer the same way?
2. Did the changes you made (if any) bring about any positive results for at least one student? How many of your five colleagues would answer the same way?
3. Would you recommend that the presenter return to the school district? How many of your five colleagues would answer the same way?
4. If the answer to question 3 is yes: Would you like to have the presenter assist in your classroom for a small portion of a day? Would you like the presenter to be in your school for a whole day, spending some time in each classroom? How many of your five colleagues would answer the same way?
5. If the presenter recommended books: Would you read any of them if the district provided them for you? How many of your five colleagues would answer the same way?
6. There are many factors involved in improving student learning, and it's difficult to isolate one input. However, do you believe that the information you gained from this professional learning will assist student learning in your classroom? How many of your five colleagues would answer the same way?

To get an accurate picture, gather the information from at least 90% of those randomly selected.

Because this process involves only a small percentage of people, it is not as time-consuming as many evaluations — and many times more effective. Thus, it can be repeated two to three more times in various intervals even a year or more later. If the same name is randomly drawn again, interview that person again. This is the process of random selection.

FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION RESOURCES

Blanchard, K., Meyer, P. J., & Ruhe, D. (2007). *Know can do! Put your know-how into action.* San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Deming, W.E. (2000). *Out of the crisis.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

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

BALANCE FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION

Both feedback and evaluation are important to measure professional learning. While professional developers have traditionally used feedback, evaluation is also a necessary component.

Evaluation must include measures of both knowledge and implementation. The LtoJ process is a simple way to measure knowledge throughout learning experiences. Interviewing a random sample of the square root of the population is an efficient way to measure implementation. Using both in combination pro-

vides a complete picture of any professional learning experience.

Chad Dumas (cdumas@esu9.org) is director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment for Hastings (Neb.) Public Schools. **Lee Jenkins (Lee@LtoJConsulting.com)** is an education consultant and the author of *Permission to Forget: And Nine Other Root Causes of America's Frustration with Education* (ASQ Quality Press, 2005). ■

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Webster Central School District

Webster, N.Y.

Number of schools: **11**

Enrollment: **8,647**

Staff: **668**

Racial/ethnic mix:

White: **89%**

Black: **3%**

Hispanic: **4%**

Asian/Pacific Islander: **3%**

Native American: **0%**

Other: **0%**

Limited English proficient: **2%**

Languages spoken: **40**

Free/reduced lunch: **13%**

Special education: **8.5%**

Contact: **Adele Bovard**,
superintendent

Email: **Adele_Bovard@**
websterschools.org

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Mike Murphy will answer questions and expand on the ideas in this article during a live webinar Nov. 7. For more information and to register: www.learningforward.org/learning-opportunities/webinars.





A CONVERGENCE OF ENERGY AND TALENT

**EXTERNAL SUPPORT BOOSTS NEW YORK
DISTRICT'S LITERACY INITIATIVE**



By Mike Murphy and Linda Sykut

Like many school districts, the Webster Central School District in New York was sandwiched between shrinking resources and looming imperatives such as implementation of the Common Core State Standards and new measurements of teacher and principal effectiveness.

With the demand for accelerated, more efficient improvement in outcomes, the district realized it was vital to connect the dots between a strong, sustained foundation of professional learning and student learning.

In fall 2010, the district chose to focus on its elementary literacy program. Webster's elementary students were entering middle school with a wide variety of skills and degree of preparedness in literacy. District leaders invited evaluators from Learning Forward's Center for Results to

interview building administrators and teachers, conduct learning walks, and review assessment data.

After this audit, district leaders used these data and their analysis to create an action plan that would:

1. Establish a clear vision and define specific steps for planning and implementing a district comprehensive literacy program;
2. Ensure that all teachers provide effective core instruction that impacts student learning in literacy and is aligned with the Common Core standards;
3. Define the roles and responsibilities of teacher leaders; and
4. Build capacity to ensure consistency and support at the school level.

INITIAL PLANNING AND STRUCTURING

Teachers across the district needed to build a shared common knowledge of literacy instruction. Building prin-

cipals and assistant principals also wanted to share that understanding, not only with teachers, but also with principal colleagues in the other elementary schools.

District leaders solicited external help to initiate and implement the work. One external consultant would provide explicit teaching about quality components of a comprehensive literacy program to teachers, specialists, teacher leaders, and administrators. The second consultant would provide professional learning and coaching to help staff understand and mobilize to move the work from initiation through full implementation.

Mike and Debby Murphy, senior consultants with Learning Forward's Center for Results, became part of the team to provide planning, support, and

VISION FOR LITERACY

When this literacy initiative is fully in place, how do you think our school will be changed? Think about these key groups and our school structure.



- Students
- Teachers
- Parents
- Community
- School

professional learning to guide the literacy initiative.

An important planning step was to align the language of this work with the multiple initiatives in the district. The district was simultaneously engaged in at least three other major initiatives at the start of the literacy work, including understanding a new state-mandated teacher evaluation system, study of Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching, and a districtwide focus on family engagement and partnership.

District leaders worked diligently to

help staff understand how a focus on literacy would mutually support these other initiatives, explaining, for example, that when teachers designed minilessons for small guided reading groups, they were working on Domain 1 of the Framework for Teaching.

ENERGY AND INITIATION

District and building leaders, teachers, administrators, and external consultants were now ready to begin. Teachers and administrators, guided by the external consultants, created an overall vision for literacy. This would prove to be an important tool to provide focus for gathering evidence of implementation from fall 2010 through the 2013-14 school year. Working in school teams first, the 70 participants created graphics and words that illustrated the ideas in the box above.

Participants came to consensus about what was most powerful for each of the affected groups — students, teachers, parents, community, and the schools. Noteworthy was the process. First, school teams, composed of the principal, assistant principal, and teachers, created their own forms of the vision. Then, through facilitated activities, the entire group came to consensus around one vision.

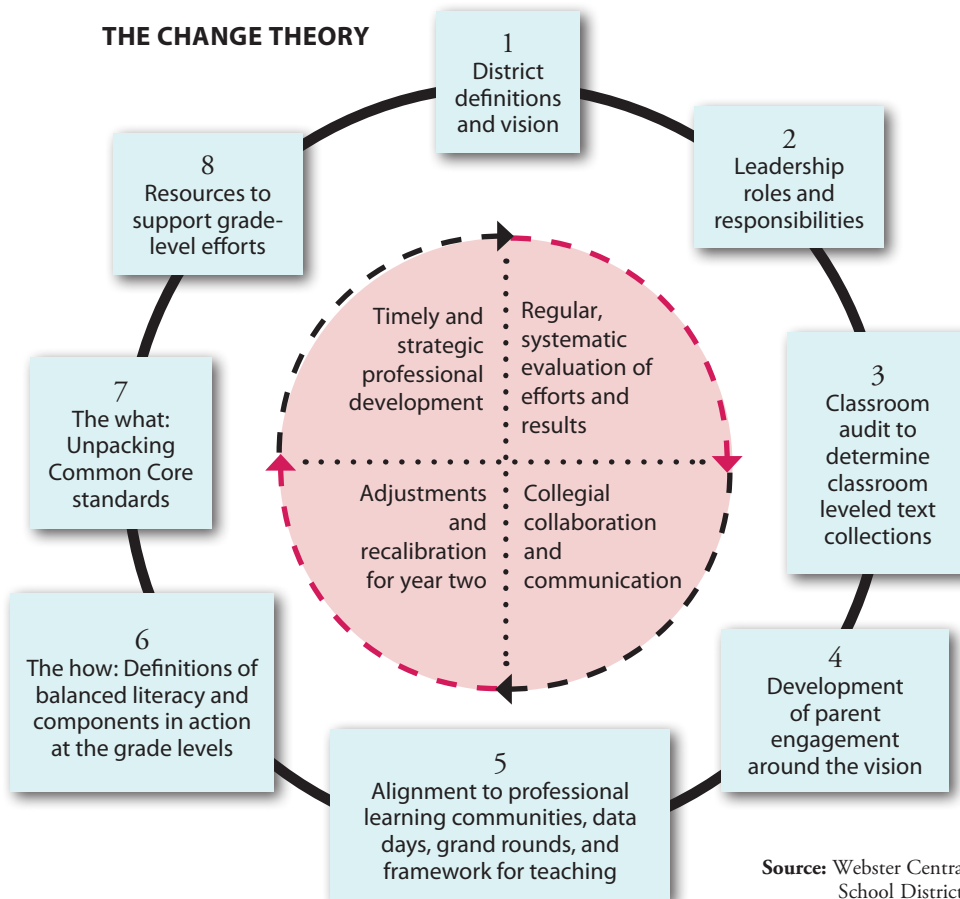
The process energized the meeting. The final vision statement was purposely lengthy and designed to create a word picture of the anticipated changes (see p. 43).

DEVELOPING A CHANGE THEORY

Next, the team developed assumptions and theory of the work that needed to be done to realize the vision. They translated this theory into definitive short-term action steps that could be measured at strategic points during the first year and following years. These action steps drove the professional learning that threaded through the district.

The four key elements in the change

THE CHANGE THEORY



Source: Webster Central School District.

The Webster Central Schools are dedicated to a student-centered, innovative, rigorous elementary balanced literacy program where:

STUDENTS:

- Are engaged in and value literacy as a life skill;
- Are known, challenged, and believed in as learners in a safe environment that values literacy;
- Identify, articulate and demonstrate the strategies of good readers and writers;
- Help guide their own personal literacy achievement pathways through personal goal setting;
- Interact with text at their independent levels the majority of each school day;
- Are challenged at their literacy instructional levels a portion of each school day;
- Have access to engaging materials that they can read, understand, and learn from on their own; and
- Use their literacy strategies in multiple contexts to learn and problem solve both in school and outside of school.

TEACHERS:

- Demonstrate and articulate a common understanding of a comprehensive, balanced literacy program focused on student goals and outcomes;
- Build on their own teaching strengths while capitalizing on student capabilities and student learning strengths;
- Incorporate innovative, powerful,

VISION STATEMENT FOR WEBSTER CENTRAL SCHOOLS



differentiated, literacy practices in daily work with students;

- Create supportive and challenging classroom cultures that immerse students in literacy and promote student risk taking;
- Effectively use professional learning communities to drive decisions about assessment, the analysis of assessment data, and implications for changes in instruction;
- Regularly participate in high-quality, authentic, differentiated district and schoolwide professional development and implement the content and skills into daily practice; and
- Nurture new and deeper partnerships with parents and

community leaders to promote literacy and create supportive literacy cultures at home.

SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL LEADERS:

- Showcase literacy instruction that is differentiated, based on readiness, learning profile, and /or interest;
- Guarantee clear, consistent literacy outcomes for each grade level;
- Demonstrate understanding of the essential literacy outcomes for each grade level and support the alignment of these consistent outcomes across grade levels;
- Exemplify clarity of district and school literacy leadership roles and act according to those roles;
- Create and sustain structures to support frequent conversations about literacy using common district language; and
- Support the sustained and accessible professional literacy learning through ongoing, job-embedded, collaborative implementation of powerful, innovative practices.

PARENTS AND COMMUNITY:

- Are invested in literacy partnerships among parents, schools, and the community to promote high levels of literacy;
- Interact with children to support and sustain developmental literacy learning at home and in the community;
- Support engagement in relevant and authentic literacy applications; and
- Demand that students invest in literacy as high-performing citizens.

Source: Webster Central School District.

theory center held the elaborated steps together for the duration. The change theory's broad steps, listed in a cyclical fashion, illustrate a recurring sequence of work (see figure on p. 42).

CHANGE THEORY IN ACTION

Instrumental to supporting instructional changes in literacy

was creating, maintaining, and using the classroom libraries.

“It was important, as I worked with teachers and administrators, to make sure that the changes in balanced literacy included the classroom resources to support the change,” said literacy expert Debby Murphy, one of the external consultants. “I knew that if I was going to advocate these changes, the dis-

trict had to deliver these classroom library materials in an equitable and manageable fashion to all schools.”

If elementary teachers were going to be asked to implement dramatic changes in their classrooms, they needed the resources to support it. Therefore, the consensus was to address action steps 3 (classroom audit to determine classroom leveled text collections) and 8 (resources to support grade-level efforts) immediately to build those resources close to classroom use.

District leaders committed to investing in classroom libraries of informational, nonfiction leveled texts to support the shifts in the Common Core standards. While professional learning focused on raising teachers’ awareness, the district made an informal survey of classroom resources to determine resources already available.

When this was done, the district purchased leveled texts for the elementary schools. Working with one of the external consultants, teachers learned how to use the new resources. Working with the other consultant, school administrators learned to manage the resources as well as needs arising from the new resources and demands for shifts in instruction.

District and school leaders used two tools from the Concerns-Based Adoption Model: the Stages of Concern and Levels of Use (Hall & Hord, 2011). Leaders used informal interviews to determine teachers’ worries or concerns in using these new resources and the implementation demands arising from dramatic changes in reading instruction.

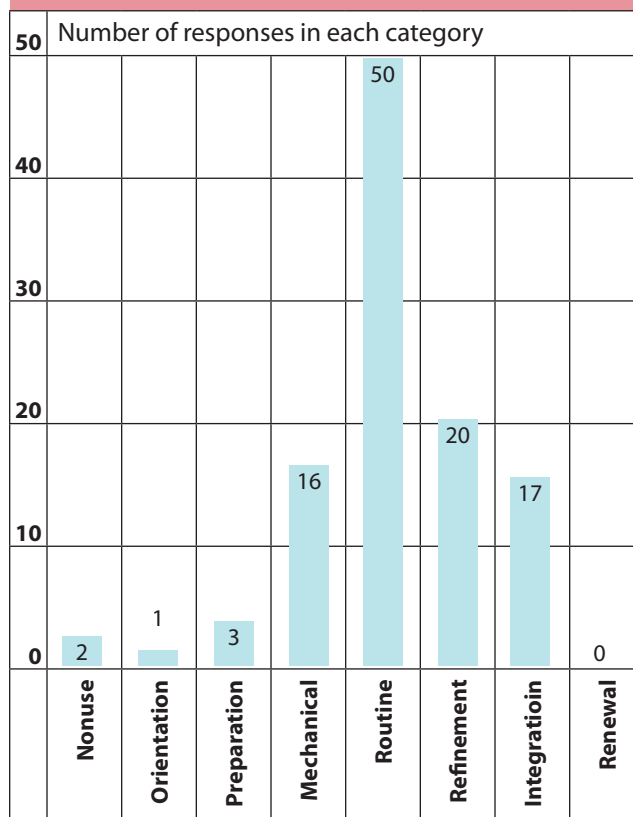
The planning team theorized that teachers’ concerns about these new classroom resources, if not addressed through thoughtful interventions or support, might derail their eventual application into classroom practice. The team also needed a clear sense of how the classroom libraries were being put into practice — mechanically, routinely, or with refinements. The two tools would help evaluate these theories.

Mark Schichtel, K-12 science director, and Scott Wilcox, K-12 social studies director, took the lead in working with teachers to gather accurate evidence of teachers’ concerns and use of the libraries. “Using the Levels of Use and the Stages of Concern allowed us to diagnose our current state and treat it appropriately,” Schichtel said.

“From the evaluative process, we were able to plan strategically how to move forward in a way that would take advantage

DISTRICTWIDE LEVELS OF USE: CLASSROOM LIBRARIES

To what extent are you using the classroom libraries with students?



of the progress made to that point.”

Rosanne Kulikowski, 3rd-grade teacher, said, “This collection of books has made a significant difference in the level of student engagement. Students practice new reading and thinking strategies that focus on, for example, questioning, noticing how our thinking changes, and making inferences.

When students are in control of which books to read and those books are of high interest and at different reading levels, it makes learning much more meaningful. Students are able to use strategies taught with books at their own text level, which leads to mastery.”

At the end of the second year of implementation, lead teachers provided examples of teacher, student, leadership,

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learning and increase educator capacity to improve student achievement. The center offers support services to school systems nationwide, customizing its assistance to meet district needs. Through Coaches’ Connect, the center provides instructional

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ACTIONS THAT CONNECT TO THE LITERACY VISION

Little evidence

Some evidence

Lots of evidence

LITERACY VISION: STUDENTS		Webster Central School District, May 2012				
Use literacy strategies in multiple contexts to learn and problem solve both in school and outside of school.	2	7				
Access to engaging materials that they can read, understand and learn from on their own.	1		9			
Challenged at their literacy instructional levels a portion of each school day.	1		10			
Interact with text at their independent levels the great majority of each school day.		6	4			
Help guide their own personal literacy achievement pathways through personal goal setting.	1		10			
Identify, articulate, and demonstrate the strategies of good readers and writers.		7	5			
Are known, challenged, and believed in as learners in a safe environment that values literacy.	2		9			
Are engaged in and value literacy as a life skill.	2	7				

LITERACY VISION: TEACHERS		Webster Central School District, May 2012				
Nurture new and deeper partnerships with parents and community leaders to promote literacy and create supportive literacy cultures at home.	3	4				
Regularly participate in high-quality, authentic, differentiated district and schoolwide professional learning and implement the content and skills into their practice.		7	3			
Effectively use professional learning communities to drive decisions about assessment, the analysis of assessment data, and implications for changes in practice.		6	7			
Create supportive and challenging classroom cultures that immerse students in literacy and promote student risk taking.	1		6			
Incorporate innovative, powerful, differentiated literacy practices in daily work with students.		7	3			
Build on their own teaching strengths while capitalizing on student capabilities and student learning strengths.		5	4			
Demonstrate and articulate a common understanding of a comprehensive, balanced literacy program focused on student goals and outcomes.	2	7	3			

parent, and community actions that connected to components within the literacy vision. The evidence showed that the district had made progress with students and teachers (see chart above). However, parents and the community had the fewest specific examples and would become a focus of the district's efforts for year three.

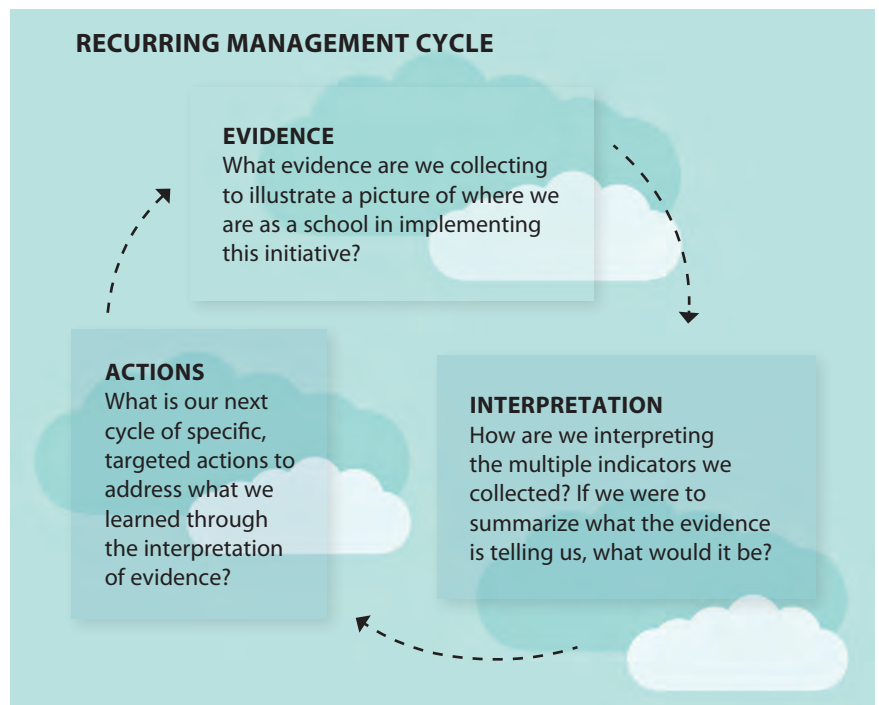
TRUST AND EXPERTISE

While the district's original concerns about its elementary literacy program proved to be accurate, using external evaluators to assess it eliminated anxiety about district motives and allowed stakeholders to respond openly about the current state of the literacy program. As the evaluators' program review sum-

mary and recommendations were shared, teachers nodded their heads, recognizing the truth of what was being described. The simultaneous arrival of the Common Core State Standards made it logical to embrace this change.

An important first decision was to select external consultants, who not only have — and must be seen as having — content expertise, but can quickly become accepted and trusted by the teams of teachers and administrators who will work with them for an extended period. The district committed early on to the continued use of the external support. This consistency and familiarity resonated with the staff and built trust among them as district leaders asked them to set new goals for deeper implementation of the work.

Simultaneous professional learning, focused on literacy but branching into as-



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- Academy XIII
- Academy XIV
- Academy XV
- Academy XVI
- Academy XVII
- Academy Class of 2008
- Academy Class of 2009
- Academy Class of 2010
- Academy Class of 2011
- Academy Class of 2012
- Academy Class of 2013
- Duval Academy
- New Orleans Academy
- Philadelphia Academy
- Toronto Academy

pects of teaching, learning, management, and evaluation around literacy, was key to the plan's success. The simultaneous parallel work with teachers and administrators gave them a common language so they could more easily talk about reading and writing in their schools with each other.

The use of surveys, classroom visits, informal dialogues with teachers, and the results of the Stages of Concern and Levels of Use interviews all worked seamlessly and provided a deep, clear illustration of the work.

THE WORK CONTINUES

Now in the fifth year of the district's action plan, district leaders manage the work and evaluate progress with continued help from external support. The Stages of Concern and Levels of Use tools help the district monitor how the changes affect teachers' thinking and practice.

In addition, all district and building leaders use a recurring management cycle (see figure on p. 46) to illustrate progress in literacy. External consultants coach district and building leaders to illustrate their own contextual portrait of literacy in their schools using tools and evaluative strategies.

The combination of external consultants and district leaders

scaffolding adult learning over time, then incrementally measuring the implementation and application of that learning, has given the district a feeling of control over the reforms it is expected to implement. External support, carefully orchestrated by district leaders, combined with thoughtful planning and long-term professional learning has proven to be a convergence of energy and talent focused on results for teachers and students.

REFERENCE

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•
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MAKE THE CASE FOR COACHING

BOLSTER SUPPORT WITH EVIDENCE THAT COACHING MAKES A DIFFERENCE

By Ellen Eisenberg and Elliott Medrich

It is not difficult to persuade school leaders and teachers that instructional coaching represents an important alternative to traditional teacher professional learning. Many recognize that job-embedded professional learning in the form of instructional coaching, aligned to a clear set of research-based practices, is nonevaluative, and, if provided with regularity, can help teachers become better at their craft. Real-time, side-by-side support is infinitely more effective than drop-in or drive-by professional learning that offers no opportunity for collaboration and collective problem solving.

There may be general agreement on this point, but that is not enough. In fact, a very important constituency — policymakers — has not been especially enthusiastic about the promise of coaching. Why is that? Policymakers want to see evidence that coaching makes a difference for teachers and students. To this group, making a difference means improving performance on standardized tests. In the current fiscal climate, leaders want to know not only that their investments are based on firm grounds theoretically, but also that instructional coaching works.

Our experience in Pennsylvania has been that evidence of positive gains in student outcomes is critical to getting attention from those whose support we need. As with any other form of effective professional learning, showing results is often the hardest thing to do. We think that our

initiatives work, we hear anecdotally that they work, but hard evidence? Often there isn't any. It's challenging, if not impossible, to show immediate results for students with a range of skills and a variety of needs.

Building the evidentiary base is a central preoccupation at the Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching, whose mission is to help teachers become better at their practice with the objective of improving student engagement and student outcomes. We live by a set of guidelines intended to provide constituents with the information they need in order to persuade school boards, superintendents, and school leaders that instructional coaching represents a good investment.

At the institute, we believe that we have an exceptional teacher professional learning support system. We believe that every teacher deserves a coach and that coaching helps teachers improve their practice, and, in turn, meet students' needs. At the same time, we recognize that moving the dial on student outcomes is difficult and that only with good data and thoughtful evaluation can we assure funders and those participating in our work that instructional coaching is a worthy teacher professional learning investment.

•
Ellen Eisenberg (eisenberg@pacoaching.org) is executive director and **Elliott Medrich** (elliottmedrich@gmail.com) is a senior advisor and evaluator at the Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching. ■

DON'T FORGET TO EVALUATE.

1

Seems simple, but that's not always the case. With limited funds, program managers often treat evaluation as an afterthought — something to worry about after the hard work associated with design and implementation has been addressed. Evaluation, however, needs to live near the top of the list of things about which to worry. It is every bit as important as any other aspect of an instructional coaching initiative. Evaluation also matters in a more general sense in that others seeking to replicate an instructional coaching framework need evidence that it works, or else it will be difficult for them to gain the support of policymakers and practitioners.

IF THE EVIDENTIARY BASE AROUND YOUR AREA OF WORK IS THIN OR NONEXISTENT, WORRY ABOUT HOW THIS WILL AFFECT YOUR FUNDING PROSPECTS.

2

Why doesn't every school district jump at the chance to fund coaching? Because it's an investment — school districts are funding coaches *instead* of doing something else — those who must allocate scarce resources want to know that they are making a wise decision. If there isn't much in the way of evidence, it's hard to argue the case persuasively.

RIGOR MATTERS.

4

If you are bothering to do evaluation research, do it well. Be clear about what you are trying to measure. Be clear on what metrics matter. Craft good instrumentation. Undertake robust and appropriate analyses. Report results completely, not just the good bits. Tell the story, and be honest about what has been learned.

LET EVALUATION DRIVE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT.

5

Evaluation is not scary. It should be your best friend. It should help you think and rethink what you are doing and recalibrate your work to improve the prospects of meeting your objectives. If you are afraid to critically evaluate what you are doing and how you are doing it, you are out of step with current funding philosophy. In the case of instructional coaching, we need to continue to build the evaluation portfolio so that others can learn how it can fit into the larger picture of professional learning and understand how to use instructional coaching to meet teacher and student needs.

IF YOU EXPECT THAT ALL THE EVIDENCE WILL SHOW AMAZING, AWESOME RESULTS, YOU HAVEN'T BEEN PAYING ATTENTION TO EDUCATION EVALUATION LITERATURE.

3

Smart policymakers know that outcomes are not all great and not always consistent. They know that even programs that work well in some circumstances may not work well in other settings or in the hands of other personnel. The trick is to have enough evidence available so that program managers can understand, as best as they can, which circumstances hold the best promise for success. In our work at the Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching, we recognize that certain kinds of supports are essential to a successful instructional coaching initiative. We do our best to help districts and schools create conditions that may lead to success. We use evaluations to help make these data-driven decisions.

WEAVE DATA INTO LEARNING

SUPPORT AND PLANNING ARE KEY TO INTEGRATING DATA USE INTO TEACHER PRACTICE

By Jo Beth Jimerson

During a dialogue in a course for aspiring principals, I laughingly shared a story from my days as a middle school teacher as an example of ineffective professional learning. The district had purchased computers (for every teacher!), and we were provided a beginning-of-year, one-hour training on the basics of the district network and expected uses. One catch: The vendor was late with delivery, so we sat in a small room — sans any computers — and passively listened to a central office representative talk about what the interface would look like when the computers were delivered.

This happened more than 15 years ago. Imagine my surprise when a middle school teacher in a large urban district shared a similar — but more recent — story. “When we got our last data system, they made us all sit in the auditorium and showed us a video of screen shots while someone on the video described the system,” he said. “We didn’t even get a live person.”

Though the middle school teacher’s complaint was on the extreme end of what I generally hear from teachers, the underlying dissatisfaction with the lack of support in learning about data use fits with what I’ve learned working with teachers and school leaders over the past decade. While the majority of school leaders with whom I’ve worked are familiar with the general characteristics of effective professional learning, these practices

“Reflecting on my experiences as a teacher and principal, in light of current research, I concluded that two issues seem to contribute to this knowing-doing gap: Responsibility for supporting data use is often diffused to the point of dilution among district personnel, and planning related to professional learning for data use is fragmented between the technology and curriculum and instruction divisions within district central offices.”

— Jo Beth Jimerson



seem to get lost when the learning involves data use or data systems. Somehow, data use becomes something to which effective professional learning practices are only sporadically applied.

Most district and campus leaders with whom I’ve spoken describe content-area professional learning as needing to be job-embedded, just-in-time, ongoing, and active — all characteristics emphasized in the Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011) as well as in a broad swath of professional learning research. Why, then, do many of these same leaders schedule one-shot workshops, training sessions, or beginning-of-year/end-of-year data reviews that violate many of these same standards of practice?

Reflecting on my experiences as a teacher and principal, in light of current research, I concluded that two issues seem to contribute to this knowing-doing gap: Responsibility for supporting data use is often diffused to the point of dilution among district personnel, and planning related to professional learning for data use is fragmented between the technology and curriculum and instruction divisions within district central offices.

DIFFUSION

When I ask school leaders who is responsible for helping teachers learn the ins and outs of data use, a common answer is, “We all are!” (Jimerson & Wayman, 2011). When pressed to name who maintains ultimate responsibility for ensuring that effective learning supports specific to data use are in place, many educators seem perplexed. Several comment that one department might help with the platform, while another works with reports, and still another works with how to look at the data. They struggle to identify a particular person, department, or team that supports professional learning for data use.

While it may be admirable that everyone shares a sense of collective responsibility for helping peers learn about data use, this approach can create gaps in learning supports. What data are educators expected to use? When? From what systems are data available, and, if a team of educators uses data to identify a problem, what resources are available to address that problem?

What’s problematic about a diffused, piecemeal approach to supporting data use is that rarely does a coherent

picture of learning emerge. Instead, teachers are left to fit together numerous and disparate pieces of a puzzle to make sense of sometimes overwhelming amounts of data.

Sometimes, when a responsibility is identified as “everyone’s job,” it risks ending up as no one’s job — it falls through the cracks created by the fast-paced nature of schools, where leaders may be tugged in multiple directions on any given day. In this way, a diffusion of responsibility for ensuring that data-related professional learning gets done, and gets done in a manner reflective of effective professional learning, creates challenges for improving the capacity of teachers to engage in data-informed practice.

FRAGMENTATION

Some districts also contend with fragmented planning and supports for data use-related professional learning. When planning for data-related professional learning does happen, it treats data use as something separate and parallel from general or content-area professional learning. I’ve heard leaders talk about professional learning related to data use as “compartmentalized” away from issues of teaching and learning, and this can be an apt description.

Teachers describe workshops scheduled in the summer, or at the beginning or end of year, in which vendor representatives or district technology office staff provide training on data system platforms and how to navigate through the data system. They rarely use their own students’ data in these trainings, and, because many occur during the summer, a best-case scenario generally involves using data of students who have moved on to the next grade.

Similarly, some district leaders paint a picture of fragmented planning. Computers and related hardware are typically purchased and supported by the technology side of the central office. Thus, training sessions involving data systems sometimes fall to people or to vendors whose primary district contacts work with technology, but not necessarily in an instructional capacity.

The problem is that many of these people — while adept with technology and systems — have little experience in a classroom or with facilitating effective professional learning. Some leaders in these roles have shared that they feel unsure of what teachers need or want and wish they had more collaboration with their counterparts in the curriculum and

instruction department.

Central office-level departments may assume ownership of particular data. An accountability office might take charge of benchmark data, while an elementary reading specialist might house primary reading inventory data. These staff members sometimes provide training on data use, but only as it pertains to their data.

To be certain, some teachers have also shared narratives that involve integration of data use with content-based professional learning. However, these almost always involve a data-able principal or talented leader who oversees a special program or department (e.g. bilingual education or special education). These exemplars are the exception. Still, they indicate that, in some districts, creative leaders capable of integrating data use with the broader narrative of teaching and learning do exist. The challenge for districts is to find these innovators and scale up their practices.

BRIDGING THE GAP

Teachers and school leaders have been pressed to use data over the last few decades, and that pressure is increasing. Yet while data use has become a popular term among educators and politicians, evidence demonstrates that teachers and school leaders still struggle with making sense of data in the service of improved learning outcomes (Means, Padilla, DeBarger, & Bakia, 2009). Work by Elmore (2009) suggests that sometimes school leaders and policymakers assume capacity where it is lacking. Just because most of today's teachers have always existed in a context characterized by accountability and data use does not mean they have the knowledge and skills needed to make good use of data to improve instruction.

There is no evidence that supporting improved capacity to use data is best done by implementing professional learning that

diverges from that captured in the Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011). There is growing evidence that, just like any other new knowledge or skill, teachers might best improve their capacity for data use by engaging in data use in ways that align with the characteristics noted in the standards — e.g. job-embedded, collaborative, marked by social engagement, and ongoing in nature (Kerr, Marsh, Ikemoto, Darilek, & Barney, 2006; Marsh, McCombs, & Martorell, 2010). To do this well requires that leaders engage in thoughtful planning and that they apply what they already know about effective professional learning practices to data use and data systems use.

Pulling from research as well as from experience and interactions with teachers and leaders, I offer three suggestions for district leaders as they work to support data-informed practice among teachers:

- **Assign ultimate responsibility for the development and execution of a coherent, embedded plan to support teacher data use.**

Someone needs to be in a position to drive the continual evaluation of whether and how teachers' needs related to data use are being met. This leader should be able to bring multiple voices to the planning table and outline the data-related skills and knowledge that the district will commit to helping each teacher develop.

- **Consider what skills and knowledge are needed for teachers to engage in data-informed practice, and ensure that these are supported throughout existing professional learning structures.**

District leaders should facilitate bridging among department personnel who share responsibility in any way for maintaining data systems and providing data system, technological, or data use and analysis support. Those who work at central office are no less learners than teachers or students; their own learning (in this case, around how to support data use among teachers) needs to be collaborative, relevant, and ongoing.

- **Fully integrate data-related professional learning so that data use becomes a tool used to continually evaluate and improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment.**

Data use is not a separate element of the teaching and learning narrative — it's an interwoven component of that narrative. Until it is similarly interwoven into other professional learning (rather than stacked onto other learning practices), leaders inadvertently reinforce the idea that data use is something extra rather than a fundamental component of teaching.

LOOKING FORWARD

What would happen if effective professional learning practices were applied to data use-related knowledge and skills? Let's return to the experience of the middle school teacher at the beginning of this article.

If district leaders applied the characteristics of effective professional learning to data use, that teacher would not have been

RESOURCES ON DATA USE

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Hamilton, L., Halverson, R., Jackson, S.S., Mandinach, E., Supovitz, J.A., & Wayman, J.C. (2009). *Using student achievement data to support instructional decision making*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation, Institute of Education Sciences.

Louis, K.S., Leithwood, K., Wahlstrom, K.L., & Anderson, S.E. (2010, July). *Learning from leadership: Investigating the links to improved student learning*. St. Paul, MN: Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement.

Wei, R.C., Darling-Hammond, L., Andree, A., Richardson, N., & Orphanos, S. (2009). *Professional learning in the learning profession: A status report on teacher development in the United States and abroad*. Dallas, TX: National Staff Development Council.

sitting in a large group in an auditorium watching a video of screen shots of a data system. He would likely be learning to use the data system in a small, collaborative group facilitated by another educator.

He would be using real-time data on his own students, and this data use would be couched in terms directly related to his instructional practice in his particular content area. He would be able to use data in collaboration with a team of teachers, draw conclusions, bounce ideas off peers, and change something about his practice immediately.

When he encountered challenges, his campus or district plan would point him to a reliable contact (either a teacher leader or administrator) who could help him in a timely manner. In effect, this teacher's learning about data use would neither be separate nor parallel from other professional learning. It would be an invisible, yet ever-present component of the professional learning already taking place.

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TOP SKILLS FOR TOUGH CONVERSATIONS

SPARK EFFECTIVE DIALOGUE TO SOLVE COMPLEX ISSUES

By Steven A. Schiola

To ensure that all students learn at high levels, teachers must collaborate with colleagues to examine student achievement data, plan or adjust instruction, and track student progress (Schmoker, 2006). By meeting in professional learning communities (Dufour, 2004), teachers continually examine instructional strategies and improve student learning.

This school-based, classroom-focused, teacher-initiated reform requires school and district leaders who possess the skills to create conditions that allow teachers to collaborate effectively. Although teacher and administrator preparation programs might not equip educators to do this, school and district leaders can teach and model the skills necessary to facilitate productive conversations among teachers.

Facilitation skills that create the conditions for effective teacher dialogue include:

- Understand the problem clearly.
- Understand the purpose of each meeting.
- Establish working agreements.
- Use effective decision-making strategies.
- Ensure every voice is in the room (Schiola, 2011).

What follows is an explanation of these skills and a protocol lead teachers and educational leaders can implement to guide faculty through difficult conversations to solve complex problems.

UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM CLEARLY

The first facilitation skill is to clearly understand the problem. This sounds obvious, yet without a clear understanding of the real problem, a group can waste valuable time and effort heading down many wrong paths.

For instance, it is not enough to be aware that reading achievement for 5th-grade students must improve or, even more specifically, that the area of concern is comprehension. These topics are too broad to inspire effective intervention techniques.

School leaders and teachers must probe deeper, using formal and informal assessment data to determine that students are strong in literal comprehension but are lost when asked to make inferences about a poem they've just read. Understanding the real problem allows teachers to design creative interventions to teach students how to infer successfully.

UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE OF EACH MEETING

Facilitators also need a clear understanding of the purpose of each meeting and how that purpose fits in with the overall purpose of the school.

At the outset of a new project, groups vow to adhere to protocols, but distractions creep in. Being clear about the purpose of each meeting will focus participants' attention on the topic and provide a way to evaluate the meeting's success. Here are two examples of clear purpose statements for meetings:

- "At the meeting today, we will identify all of the students who already meet the objective, those who are in progress, and those students who do not meet the objective at all."
- "During this meeting, we will brainstorm strategies to help students understand the concept of photosynthesis completely and decide which three we will implement."

ESTABLISH WORKING AGREEMENTS

To work successfully with a group and avoid needless confrontation and misunderstanding, the facilitator needs to make the social rules explicit and understood by all.

There are three reasons for this. First, the facilitator's job is to ensure that group members have a safe working environment. In some cases, the group will be working on sensitive issues or will include people who are in outright conflict with one another. Making these rules explicit ensures that safety.

Second, by establishing overt social rules, the facilitator eliminates some of the classic avenues for people to derail the process, such as interrupting others, refusing to follow instructions, making snide comments, or having side conversations, to name a few. Third, people will operate using social rules, so the facilitator can establish or emphasize social rules that he or she believes will be most effective for the group.

The simplest process for developing working agreements is to provide the group with a list, such as:

- Honor our diversity.
- Work for the common good.
- Presume good intentions.
- Participate fully.

- Take care of your needs.
- Solve problems face to face.
- Respect one another.
- Have fun!

The facilitator makes certain that the group understands each item on the list, then asks for any additions. Once the group has agreed on the contents of the list, the working agreement is used during each meeting.

Note: Working agreements only work if they are used and enforced. The facilitator will know if they are embedded in the process if group members reinforce compliance.

USE EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING STRATEGIES

When groups work together, conflicts arise, especially if group members don't have a clear understanding of how they will make decisions.

Here's an example: Four 2nd-grade teachers are working to identify teaching strategies that will help students effectively read words with long vowels. At the end of a meeting, two of the teachers understand that they are to implement the strategies identified in the meeting immediately, while the other two teachers expect to continue the discussion at the next meeting. The first two teachers then introduce the strategies to their classes, and the other two do not. At the next meeting, an argument ensues.

The conflict could have been avoided if the teachers had adopted a decision-making strategy before starting their work. Two decision-making strategies used regularly are consensus and voting.

With voting, the group adopts the majority opinion. Of course, this means that, with each decision, there are winners and losers.

With consensus, the group works to develop a decision all members can live with and implement. This decision-making strategy may take longer than voting, but there is higher compliance with the decision.

Consensus decision-making is only successful if all involved adhere to these guidelines:

1. Everyone's voice is heard in the discussion about the decision.
2. Everyone can live with the decision.
3. Everyone can support the decision publicly.
4. Anyone who disagrees must suggest an alternative solution (Chadwick, 2000).

No matter which strategy is used, group members must identify it at the beginning of the process and use it to guide their work.

ENSURE EVERY VOICE IS IN THE ROOM

The key to solving complex problems in groups of any size is listening (Chadwick, 2000). For groups to work

CURRENT STATE/PREFERRED FUTURE PROTOCOL

Once teachers are comfortable with the protocol, they can expect the entire process to take 45 to 60 minutes. Discussing the current state and preferred future will take about 15 minutes each. The remaining 15 to 30 minutes is used to develop effective strategies to address the identified problem(s). The more accurate the data used to identify the current state, the quicker teachers can get to the other two steps.

Current state (15 minutes)

1. Each member of the group lists the current state of the situation or problem he or she is working on. Write in as much detail as possible about the status of student achievement in the focus area (i.e. how many students are proficient, developing, or unsatisfactory in the skill area, what strategies have been tried, the assessment results, etc.)
2. Each group member shares his or her list, and each response is recorded.
3. After all the items are discussed, group members make note of the themes they see in the results.

Preferred future (15 minutes)

4. Next, the group considers the preferred future. Each member writes what he or she thinks would be the goal of the work (i.e. all students will score proficient on the assessment, 95% of students will complete the task with 80% accuracy or above, etc.).
5. Each group member shares his or her responses, and the group decides on a goal.

Next steps (15 to 30 minutes)

6. Group members list instructional strategies that will help students achieve the stated goal.
7. Group members share and record strategies, then the whole group decides which strategies to implement.
8. Teachers in the group implement the agreed-upon strategies, administer assessment, and come back together to examine the results.

effectively, each person needs a chance to express his or her opinion while the others listen. It is only through the combined wisdom of the entire group that reasonable and doable solutions are developed.

The way to ensure that every voice is heard is by slowing down the process and working in small groups. Effective groups slow the process down by hearing from each member of the group individually. This ensures that each person has an opportunity to speak without competition or interruption. A large group can be subdivided into smaller groups of four to five people.

Once group members get into the habit of hearing from each person in turn, the process can move quickly. While a free-flowing discussion of ideas can be useful and stimulating, many times the discussion is dominated by a small handful of participants, forcing the rest of the group to either fight to speak or choose not to speak at all.

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

Once a group has implemented and practiced these facilitation skills, group members can put them all together to do the work of improving student achievement. Groups can focus and stay on topic if they follow a defined protocol.

One protocol that is easy to implement is called the current state/preferred future protocol (Bailey, 1997). The protocol, outlined above, is broken down into three stages: current state, preferred future, and next steps.

The protocol is a continuing cycle of discussion, implemen-

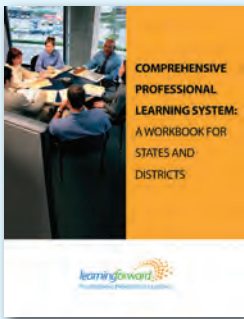
tation, data collection, and examination. As group members become familiar with the protocol and the facilitation skills, the cycle moves quickly.

When school leaders and teachers learn, model, and use these facilitation skills and protocol, small groups of highly effective teachers working collaboratively can ensure high levels of learning for all students.

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Comprehensive Professional Learning System:

A WORKBOOK FOR STATES AND DISTRICTS
Learning Forward, 2013

This workbook guides a team in reviewing, revising, or replacing an existing professional learning system. The process outlined and the tools included support the team in conducting all aspects of its work, usually done over several months, with continuous progress monitoring and input from research, experts, and constituents. The workbook is designed to be used by leaders in education agencies, including state departments or ministries of education, local school systems, and other governing agencies or organizations that provide professional learning.

Available to download free at www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core.

CONDUCT ONGOING ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Assessment and evaluation have multiple purposes. First, they support continuous improvement. With data collected in formative and summative evaluations, leaders of professional learning systems have evidence to make improvements.

Second, they generate evidence to determine whether the system is working both to support effective professional learning planning, implementation, and evaluation and to improve educator effectiveness and student success.

In addition, an evaluation can inform resource investments. For a comprehensive professional learning system to work smoothly and to meet its many goals, all components of the system must be finely tuned and coherent.

Recommended steps for the evaluation of a comprehensive professional learning system include:

- Plan the evaluation;
- Establish the evaluation framework;
- Conduct the evaluation;
- Report the evaluation; and
- Evaluate the evaluation.

Included here are two tools, [Guide to Evaluation](#) and [Professional Learning Organizing Checklist](#). The first tool summarizes these steps, outlines the questions, and serves as a planning guide for conducting an evaluation of a comprehensive evaluation system.

The second tool offers a guideline for conducting an evaluation of a comprehensive

professional learning system. This checklist, which is adapted from *Doing What Works*, a U.S. Department of Education website devoted to providing research and evidence-supported practices, is a complement to the evaluation of specific professional learning programs contained in short- and long-term professional learning plans, not a replacement for those.

These tools are from *Comprehensive Professional Learning System: A Workbook for States and Districts* (Killion, 2013), which outlines eight steps for developing a comprehensive professional learning system. The eight steps are:

1. Launch the work.
2. Collect and examine data and research.
3. Establish vision, assumptions, purpose, definition, and goals.
4. Design system operations.
5. Revise or develop policies.
6. Plan short- and long-term professional learning.
7. Provide professional learning for full implementation.
8. Conduct ongoing assessment and evaluation.

For more information, visit www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core.

REFERENCE

Killion, J. (2013). *Comprehensive professional learning system: A workbook for states and districts*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

GUIDE TO EVALUATION

Use this guide to plan, conduct, and report an evaluation of a comprehensive professional learning system.

Purpose	To guide the planning, conduct, and reporting of an evaluation of a comprehensive professional learning system.	
Nonpurpose	To provide a turnkey evaluation plan.	
Step	Question	Responses
Determine the purpose and focus of the evaluation.	What is the reason or purpose for this evaluation?	
Determine the audience for the evaluation.	Who wants this evaluation? What does this particular individual, group, etc. want to know about the comprehensive professional learning system?	

GUIDE TO EVALUATION *continued*

Step	Question	Responses
Design the evaluation questions.	What do we want to know? What questions are we trying to answer? How important is it to answer these questions?	
Determine the need for an external evaluator.	Is an external evaluator needed or can an internal team or person conduct this evaluation? What are the advantages and disadvantages of either approach? Do we have resources for an external evaluator?	
Establish the evaluation framework.	How will we conduct the evaluation? What data do we need to answer the questions? What is the source of the data? How will the data be collected? What is the timeline? How will we analyze the data? Who will be responsible for this process or aspects of it?	
Collect data.	How will we manage, track, and be accountable for accurate data collection?	

GUIDE TO EVALUATION continued

Step	Question	Responses
<p>Analyze data.</p>	<p>Are the planned data analyses appropriate given the data? What changes do we need to make? How can the analyzed data be displayed so that multiple stakeholders can interact with it easily? What additional analyses are possible that had not been planned?</p>	
<p>Interpret analyzed data.</p>	<p>How can we engage stakeholders to add value and meaning to the analyzed data? What information can they add to increase the usefulness of the analyzed data? What conclusions are evident? What recommendations do they suggest for next steps based on the conclusions?</p>	
<p>Report the findings.</p>	<p>To whom do we need to report about the evaluation? What are the best formats or media for reporting to each audience? How do we help those to whom we report understand the value and meaning of the conclusions and recommendations and engender their support?</p>	
<p>Evaluate the evaluation.</p>	<p>What did we learn about the evaluation process and our competencies as evaluators that we can apply to future evaluations? How did this evaluation help us improve our evaluation skills?</p>	

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ORGANIZING CHECKLIST

Use this tool to plan and conduct an evaluation of a comprehensive professional learning system.

Purpose	Determine readiness and thoroughness in planning an evaluation.				
Nonpurpose	Describe best practices for evaluating a comprehensive professional learning system.				
Evaluation organizer					
This organizer supports the following four primary parts of program or system evaluation:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning the evaluation; • Collecting implementation and educator and student performance data; • Analyzing and interpreting data; and • Sharing and using evaluation findings to improve quality and results. 					
Person(s) responsible for evaluation: _____					
Purpose of evaluation: _____					
Evaluation questions: _____					

Evaluation organizer checklist					
Indicate the current status of each action and note the expected date of completion.					
Action steps	Completed	In progress	Under consideration	Not applicable	Expected date of completion
A. PLAN THE EVALUATION					
1. The evaluation purpose is clearly defined (e.g. system improvement, system effectiveness, system efficiency).					
2. Key stakeholders (e.g. teachers, parents, community members, school and district administrators, third-party providers, institutions of higher education, education agencies, education advocacy groups, technical assistance providers) are involved in or informed about, as appropriate, the evaluation plan.					

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ORGANIZING CHECKLIST continued

Action steps	Completed	In progress	Under consideration	Not applicable	Expected date of completion
3. The evaluation plan has the following components:					
a. Purpose;					
b. Evaluation questions based on identified outcomes and indicators of success;					
c. Evaluation design (e.g. descriptive, qualitative, quantitative, quasi-experimental, control group, case study);					
d. Data and/or evidence needed to answer the evaluation questions;					
e. Data sources, or who or what will provide the data or evidence needed (e.g. educators, system data, resource utilization, impact data);					
f. Data collection methodology appropriate to data sources (e.g. gather existing data, conduct surveys, interviews, observations; collect artifacts, documents, records);					
g. Plans to ensure confidentiality and anonymity in data collection and reporting;					
h. Plans to meet the standards for education program evaluation standards;					
i. Plans to protect the rights of participants (e.g. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, institutional review board, when required or desired);					
j. Data analysis plans;					
k. Dissemination of final report plans;					
l. Timeline for carrying out each evaluation activity.					

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ORGANIZING CHECKLIST continued

Action steps	Completed	In progress	Under consideration	Not applicable	Expected date of completion
4. Determine the need for an external evaluator.					
5. Develop strategies for maintaining integrity, objectivity, reliability, and validity in the evaluation.					
6. Get required permissions and support from authority and stakeholders.					
7. Define roles for stakeholders engaged in the evaluation (e.g. data collection or transmission, interpretation of analyzed data, development of recommended next actions, reporting findings).					
8. Assign oversight and/or leadership for evaluation with appropriate level of authority designated.					
B. COLLECT DATA					
9. Obtain appropriate permissions or consents after informing participants about the evaluation and their rights as human subjects before data collection begins.					
10. Collect appropriate data (e.g. process, impact, implementation).					
11. Minimize data burden with the use of extant data, or using what is available when possible.					
12. Collect data from multiple stakeholders to support triangulation.					
13. Identify gaps between what the system is designed to do and how it is implemented.					
14. Analyze data to reveal information of system impact on specific educator groups (e.g. teachers, principals, district staff) or work environments (e.g. school, district, outside of school or district).					

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ORGANIZING CHECKLIST *continued*

Action steps	Completed	In progress	Under consideration	Not applicable	Expected date of completion
15. Analyze data to identify patterns, trends, etc., of successes and problem areas.					
16. Analyze data to suggest contributing factors for findings.					
17. Propose recommendations for next actions based on findings.					
18. Plan broad-based dissemination.					
19. Plan multiple dissemination media and formats as appropriate to stakeholder groups.					
20. Engage stakeholders in using findings to identify improvements.					
21. Leadership team, in collaboration with stakeholders, plans improvement actions and timeline.					
22. Improvement plan components included:					
a. Goals;					
b. Strategies for achieving goals;					
c. Roles and responsibilities for implementing the strategies;					
d. Timelines for implementing and achieving the goals;					
e. Resources for implementing the plan;					
f. Monitoring the implementation of the plan;					
g. Indicators and measurements for success.					

Source: Killion, J. (2013). *Comprehensive professional learning system: A workbook for states and districts*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.



Deep, honest conversations build trust and strengthen working relationships

I love this article about the real and raw stories told in Angela Brooks-Rallins' cabin. Coming out from behind yourself, into a conversation, and making it real is part of the search, whether born of panic or courage, for that highly personalized rapture of feeling completely yourself, happy in your own skin. And sometimes unhappy in your skin, but at least it's your skin. It is a reach for authenticity — a process of individuation — when you cease to compare yourself to others and choose, instead, to live your life. It is an opportunity to raise the bar on the experience of your life. It is a deepening of integrity — when who you are and what you live are brought into alignment. No more tamping down your soul's deepest longings in order to get approval from others. As author Andre Gide wrote, "It is better to be hated for what you are than to be loved for what you are not."

What surprises us is what a powerful attractor authenticity is. When we free our true selves, show up as ourselves, others realize it and respond in kind. It is as if we have set ourselves ablaze. Others are attracted to the warmth and add their logs to the fire. Before long, we've built a glorious bonfire around which to tell the stories that help us know and love each other. And then we can accomplish amazing things.

— Susan Scott

By Angela Brooks-Rallins

As I stood in the kitchen of our cabin, chaos was all around me. All 36 staff members of the school where I serve as principal were cooking, grilling, seasoning, and baking for our staff dinner. Laughter, music, and excitement filled the rooms.

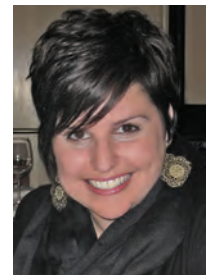
Standing alongside one teacher, I asked her what or who had an impact on her to be such a beautiful spirit. She is so joyful and compassionate. She opened up about her past, why she is so loving, and why she is excited for the school year.

"I didn't have an example. My mom was a single mother on drugs and in and

out of jobs," she told me. "We barely had anything we needed. She did not go to college. She did not encourage me to go to school. She would even tell us to stay home. At an early age, I knew I wanted more. I was not going to be like the example I saw. I can't wait to remind students about what they can do, what is possible, and that they can do whatever they dream of doing."

This conversation took place at a school staff camp where we came together to bond as a team for the school year. The summer reading that I assigned for all staff — *Teaching With Poverty in Mind* (ASCD, 2009) — challenged all of us to reflect on our own identities, biases, and experiences

that shaped who we are today. It also taught us a lot about the students we teach and suggested strategies to build relationships by considering our own as well as students' personal experiences.



Brooks-Rallins

MOVE RELATIONSHIPS FORWARD

This teacher did not have to open up and share her personal experience with me, but she did. I have worked with her for one school year and believe our school culture embraces conversations such as the one that took place in that kitchen. After three years

In each issue of *JSD*, Susan Scott (susan@fierceinc.com) explores aspects of communication that encourage meaningful collaboration. Scott, author of *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success At Work & In Life, One Conversation at a Time* (Penguin, 2002) and *Fierce Leadership: A Bold Alternative to the Worst "Best" Practices of Business Today* (Broadway Business, 2009), leads Fierce Inc. (www.fierceinc.com), which helps companies around the world transform the conversations that are central to their success. Fierce in the Schools carries this work into schools and higher education. Columns are available at www.learningforward.org. © Copyright, Fierce Inc., 2013.

of working together to build a strong staff culture, we are able to have deep and honest conversations.

One of the principles of fierce conversations is: “Come out from behind yourself into the conversation and make it real.” We often fear getting “real,” but the price of not doing this is too high. This principle is about being real in a way that moves relationships forward.

The Teacher’s Field Guide for Fierce Conversations states: “It takes courage to come out from behind ourselves and into our conversations, including those in our classrooms, and make them real. It may seem easier or safer to project the images we imagine others expect of us — with a parent, a spouse, neighbor, administrator. But it is actually the unreal, inauthentic conversations that should concern us, as they cost us dearly. ... Students hunger for real; they can sniff unreal from a mile away. No matter how good your lesson or how amazing its content, it will rarely be experienced as relevant if the key ingredient — YOU — is missing from the equation” (Moussavi-Bock & Scott, 2008).

As an administrator, I have modeled authentic conversations and had to challenge myself to show up as me, not the professional image that I thought I had to be. The more I came out from behind that image, the more my relationships with my staff evolved.



Time and trust help the masks come off.

We began to have conversations in professional development about what biases we bring to our jobs and how those biases impact the relationships we have with each other and with our students. I was the first to share about my family and growing up with divorced parents. I shared the pain and struggle that it caused and how I have used this to relate to students who may bring similar issues to school each day, along with how to overcome the challenges so I could have different results in my life.

Eventually, some of the masks that staff members wore came off as well. We shared experiences that brought us to where we are as educators working with young people today. Through these discussions, we began to find commonalities and understandings about each other that we would not have discovered if we operated with our masks on or if we projected images of what others expected us to be.

TEACHER-DRIVEN CHANGE

When I took off my mask as an administrator, I invited my staff to do this as well. It became safe for us to interact with each other authentically as human beings. Staff became more actively involved in our school and connected more deeply with each other and our students.

As teachers began to understand the effects on students of living in gang-ridden neighborhoods, hearing guns fired from dusk to dawn, they began to problem solve with what is in our control — time at the school. They introduced initiatives such as a peer tutoring program because they realize students are more likely to be distracted at home, thus not completing homework and studying for assessments.

Each staff member greets students at the door, looking at them to see if they are OK. Teachers have compassion for students’ long commute crossing gang lines. Students open up to staff to share concerns, hardships, and

celebrations because they understand that teachers care about their academic and personal success. All of these initiatives were teacher-driven and simply required approval by me.

As a staff, we also take deeper care of each other. When staff members lose loved ones, the funeral home is full of 36 familiar faces from school showing support. Teachers eat lunch together daily, meeting to plan the rest of the week, discussing student data, and sharing lesson ideas to best engage our students.

All of this is teacher-led, not required. Teachers and staff say that the trust that has been built in our relationship has enabled them to reflect more authentically, take more risks with students, and build relationships with team members.

As a staff, we collaborate more than ever. We are ready as a team to read, reflect, and share with each other. We are ready to understand and relate to each other and our student population by challenging ourselves to make individual changes to the interactions we have.

Feeling confident to take off our masks takes time and trust. We recognize that coming out from behind ourselves into the conversation and making our conversations real will take consistent commitment. We also recognize the positive results we are seeing as we depend on each other more than ever. There is too much at risk to remain superficial or inauthentic.

REFERENCE

Moussavi-Bock, D. & Scott, S. (2008). *The teacher’s field guide for fierce conversations*. Seattle, WA: Fierce Inc.

•
Angela Brooks-Rallins is principal of Perspectives Charter School Rodney D. Joslin Campus in Chicago. Joslin serves 6th- to 12th-grade youth in the city of Chicago, with 98% of students graduating and going to college. ■



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THE IMPACT FACTOR:

Why we can't neglect professional learning evaluation.
By Stephanie Hirsh

The Standards for Professional Learning and the guidance they provide lay the foundation for an effective professional learning system that demonstrates improvement and results. Aligning professional learning to the standards will help educators document impact by keeping them focused on what is most important, telling them whether they are on the right track to achieve their goals, and giving evidence to reassure those responsible for investments in professional learning.

MOVING IN UNEXPECTED DIRECTIONS:

Texas elementary uses exploratory research to map out an evaluation plan.

By Sue Chapman, Debora Ortloff, Laurie Weaver, Winona Vesey, Mary Anderson, Michael Marquez, and Melissa Sanchez

After a sudden and dramatic drop in reading scores at McWhirter Elementary Professional Development Laboratory School in Webster, Texas, school leaders needed to know what to do differently. The leadership team chose exploratory action research as the first step of its instructional improvement strategy because team members needed a more complex picture of what was happening in reading instruction than standardized test scores could reveal. The results of the research would inform their theory of change, long-term professional learning plan, and evaluation framework.

CHECKS AND BALANCES:

Built-in data routines monitor the impact of Boston's teacher leader program.

By Jill Harrison Berg, Christina A. Bosch, Nina Lessin-Joseph, and Phomdaen Souvanna

By incorporating time and tools to review data at multiple levels of the program, the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate program team has not only been able to monitor the effectiveness of this professional learning model, but has also constantly refined its process for ensuring participants succeed in their roles, facilitators lead effective learning experiences, and the larger program design meets the needs of Boston Public Schools' reform plan.

INSTRUCTIONAL COACH WEIGHS 3 TYPES OF DATA TO GET TRIPLE-STRENGTH FEEDBACK.

By Monica Boehle

Because coaching is unique and personal to each teacher, broad measurements do not accurately take into account the significant growth and change of both teacher learning and student learning. Weighing three types of data over

time — shifts in teacher reflective tendencies, the use of student performance as an indicator of success, and the contextualization of a change into long-term habits — can provide more valid program evaluation and give coaches the timely feedback they need.

COMPLETE THE PICTURE:

Evaluation fills in the missing pieces that feedback can't provide.

By Chad Dumas and Lee Jenkins

Both feedback and evaluation play an important role in determining what professional learning participants have learned. While immediate feedback ensures that participants' questions or concerns can be resolved on the spot, a deeper measure of learning is evaluation. A tool called the LtoJ process measures knowledge gained throughout learning experiences. Interviewing a random sample of participants is an effective way to gauge implementation. Using both in combination provides a complete picture of any professional learning experience.

A CONVERGENCE OF ENERGY AND TALENT:

External support boosts New York district's literacy initiative.

By Mike Murphy and Linda Sykut

Sandwiched between shrinking resources and looming imperatives, the Webster (N.Y.) Central School District chose to focus on its elementary literacy program as part of a multiyear initiative. External consultants from Learning Forward's Center for Results became part of the team to provide planning, support, and professional learning to guide the literacy initiative. The team created a change theory that led to definitive action steps that could be measured at strategic points. These action steps drove the professional learning that threaded through the district.

MAKE THE CASE FOR COACHING:

Bolster support with evidence that coaching makes a difference.

By Ellen Eisenberg and Elliott Medrich

Evidence of positive gains in student outcomes is critical to getting support for instructional coaching. As with any other form of effective professional learning, showing results is often the hardest thing to do. Policymakers want to see evidence that coaching makes a difference for teachers and students. Follow these evaluation guidelines to persuade school boards, superintendents, and school leaders that instructional coaching represents a good investment.

coming up

in December 2013 *JSD*:

THE EMERGING LEADER

features



WEAVE DATA INTO LEARNING:

Support and planning are key to integrating data use into teacher practice.

By Jo Beth Jimerson

Effective professional learning practices seem to get lost when the learning involves data use or data systems. Responsibility for supporting data use and cohesive planning related to professional learning for data use are instrumental in ensuring that data becomes a tool used to continually improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. To accomplish this, assign a leader, make sure supports are in place, and include data with other professional learning.

TOP SKILLS FOR TOUGH CONVERSATIONS:

Spark effective dialogue to solve complex issues.

By Steven A. Schiola

School-based, classroom-focused, teacher-initiated reform requires school and district leaders who possess the skills to create conditions that allow teachers to collaborate effectively. Although teacher and administrator preparation programs might not equip educators to do this, school and district leaders can teach and model the skills necessary to facilitate productive conversations among teachers. These skills include: Understand the problem clearly, understand the purpose of each meeting, establish working agreements, use effective decision-making strategies, and ensure every voice is in the room.

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columns

Collaborative culture:

Deep, honest conversations build trust and strengthen working relationships.

By Susan Scott and Angela Brooks-Rallins

A school principal describes how her relationships with staff members evolve as she steps out from behind her professional image and models authentic conversations.

From the director:

What professional learning story will you tell at the end of the school year?

By Stephanie Hirsh

Learning Forward launches “Tell Your Story” to build the case for why professional learning matters, how it makes a difference for educators and students, and why it merits the attention and investment of policymakers and education leaders.

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.

Standards for Professional Learning for iPad

Learning Forward's publication *Standards for Professional Learning* is now available in a digital version developed exclusively for the iPad. In addition to the material available in the print book, the iPad version contains more than 50 interactive tools and videos that help educators build mastery of the standards and share them with others.

These digital extras take the standards from theory to practice with videos of successful practitioners sharing real-world examples of the standards in action. Educators can virtually step into the classrooms of fellow practitioners to see what they are doing and how they bring best practices to life. The iPad version also contains links to related professional learning resources from Learning Forward.

The Standards for Professional Learning outline the characteristics of professional learning that lead to



Standards for Professional Learning for the iPad
www.learningforward.org/standards/standards-book-for-the-ipad

\$24.99 for members and nonmembers

effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results. Developed by Learning Forward in collaboration with 40 associations and organizations, the standards make explicit that the purpose of professional learning is for educators to develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions they need to help students perform at higher levels.

The standards give educators the information they need to take leadership roles as advocates for and facilitators of effective professional learning and the conditions required for its success. Widespread attention to the

standards increases equity of access to a high-quality education for every student, not just for those lucky enough to attend schools in more advantaged communities.

Use of the standards to plan, facilitate, and evaluate professional learning promises to heighten the quality of educator learning, performance of all educators, and student learning. Increased educator effectiveness makes possible a shift from current reality to the preferred outcomes of enhanced student learning results — a goal to which all educators subscribe.

book club

UNLEASHING THE POSITIVE POWER OF DIFFERENCES

Polarity Thinking in Our Schools

By Jane A.G. Kise

Does your team do more arguing than deciding?

Some conflict can be healthy for teams and professional learning communities, but when two sides are unwilling to compromise, that's where polarity management comes in. By identifying mutual goals and common concerns, polarity management helps educators turn vicious cycles of debate into virtuous circles of managing complex issues.

This book provides a three-step process for managing polarities:

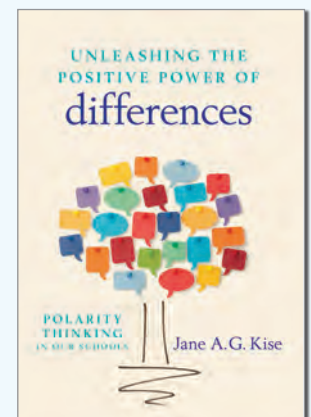
- **See it:** Recognize when you're dealing with two equally valuable perspectives on an issue.
- **Map it:** Identify the upsides and downsides of each position.
- **Tap it:** Apply strategies to leverage the best of both sides.

Kise applies the framework and tools of polarity management to

the most contentious education reform debates and guides readers in applying the framework to their local contexts.

Grounded in interdisciplinary research, the book includes sample polarity maps as well as case studies, professional development activities, and group exercises for mapping and tapping polarities.

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 Dec. 15. For more information about this or any membership package, call 800-727-7288 or email office@learningforward.org.





Our work is about ensuring that professional learning results in moving theories *of* action to theories *in* action

“Leaders of companies that experience smaller gaps between what they know and what they do understand that their most important task is not necessarily to make strategic decisions or, for that matter, many decisions at all. Their task is to help build systems of practice that produce a more reliable transformation of knowledge into action” (Pfeffer & Sutton, 1999).

Educators across the globe regularly engage in learning. This learning is usually grounded in espoused theories of action, with a hope that changes in professional practice and improved student learning will result. Yet, far too often a gap exists between what people have learned and what they do day-to-day.

Why are schools and organizations so consistently experiencing this knowing-doing gap? Alan Webber said: “Doing something actually requires doing something! It means tackling the hard work of making something happen. It’s much easier and much safer to sit around and have intellectual conversations ... and never actually implement anything” (Webber, 2000).

Gervase Bushe, a professor at Simon Fraser University in Canada, asserts that we can’t even call an experience learning without change. He describes learning as “the outcome

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

on board JEFF RONNEBERG

of an inquiry that produces knowledge and leads to change.” He adds that organizational learning requires two or more people learning together and changing how they work together (Bushe, 2010).

What does this mean for us as educational leaders — superintendents, principals, professional developers, teacher leaders? I believe it means that our work is about more than creating well-designed learning. Our work is about ensuring that professional learning results in moving our theories of action to theories *in* action.

I am not advocating for more teacher evaluation or standardized tests. I am calling for school leaders to work with staff to identify expectations for implementation, then get out of the office and talk with those who are implementing their learning. Ask simple questions: What is going well? Who is implementing well that I should recognize? Do you have what you need (Studer, 2007)?

When a school leader sees practices that are different than expected, he or she should talk with people about it. There is likely a good reason an individual isn’t implementing the desired change. Leaders need to learn why, and then support the person through it.

The most important thing a school leader can do is to create opportunities for teachers and staff to talk with one another about the difference between current reality and desired practice. Even better, create opportunities for teachers to see one another implementing their learning so they can then support one another to move their learning to a change in practice.

Creating these experiences is essential. As John Dewey wrote long ago, “We do not learn from experience ... we learn from reflecting on experience.”

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Register for upcoming webinars

Join leaders in the field for webinars on key topics affecting professional learning leaders. Webinar participants gain insight from experts and colleagues on topics such as data analysis, virtual learning communities, implementing change, and more.

Learning Forward members who participate in webinars can extend their learning in the Learning Exchange through ongoing discussion of webinar topics and sharing additional resources. To learn more about or to register for a webinar, visit www.learningforward.org/learning-opportunities/webinars.

OCTOBER 17:

Implementing Change Through Learning

Facilitated by Shirley Hord and James Roussin

Hord and Roussin help participants set a foundation for reform that lasts by offering an overview of strategies to develop trust and credibility with teachers and staff. Explore the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) and how it provides the conceptual and diagnostic framework for understanding the dynamics of change, and learn the six strategies for ensuring that change results in successful implementation.

Topics include:

- An overview of the CBAM model and its components.
- Understanding, predicting, and addressing educator concerns that may arise during the change process.
- Six strategies for moving from adoption to full implementation.
- Promoting collaboration and learning throughout a change initiative.

OCTOBER 24 & 31:

Improving Leadership and Classroom Practices

Facilitated by Sonia Gleason and Wendy Sauer

In this two-part webinar, Gleason and Sauer will explore how Success at the Core — a free, research-based and video-rich online resource — can help leverage professional learning. Participants will identify resources for their school improvement efforts, share their own stories to help connect colleagues to the tools they need most, and develop an action plan to map out specific ways to use Success at the Core tools in their setting.

Participants will also:

- Learn how to successfully navigate Success at the Core materials.
- Discuss a range of school reform initiatives and identify specific Success at the Core resources to benefit specific school improvement efforts.
- Learn how others have built leadership team and teacher

capacity.

- Map out how program resources can be effectively used in their settings.

OCTOBER 30:

Data Analysis for Continuous School Improvement

Facilitated by Victoria Bernhardt

Bernhardt, author of *Data Analysis for Continuous School Improvement* (Routledge, 2013), highlights a framework to assist schools and districts that want to commit to improving teaching and learning through the use of data. Participants will get an overview of the continuous school improvement cycle and explore the actions of schools using data for continuous improvement.

Topics include:

- A look at multiple measures of data and how they fit into an overall data analysis framework.
- A comparison of the actions of schools focused on compliance and schools committed to using data only for continuous school improvement.
- Strategies for creating a shared vision for using data to drive improvement.
- An overview of the continuous school improvement framework and cycle of continuous school improvement.

NOVEMBER 14:

Professional Learning Through Virtual Communities

Facilitated by Sonja Hollins-Alexander

Hollins-Alexander, author of *Online Professional Development Through Virtual Learning Communities* (Corwin Press, 2013), shares one district's success story as a model for combining well-designed online instruction with peer-to-peer collaboration. Hollins-Alexander will provide an overview of her Learner-Learner online collaboration model.

Topics include:

- An overview of 10 action steps for developing successful online communities of practice.
- Best practices for managing staffing and resources.
- Strategies for establishing an online learning community.

VISIT THE ARCHIVES

Here are new additions to the webinar archives.

- **Establishing Time for Professional Learning**, facilitated by Joellen Killion.
- **School Systems That Learn**, facilitated by Paul Ash.
- **The Power of Coaching**, facilitated by Joellen Killion and M. René Islas.

Join the unconference

Learning Forward's Annual Conference in December will feature a new type of preconference session, based on the unconference structure, titled Learn Now: Open and Connected Conversations.

An unconference allows participants to shape and direct the learning for the day. After a brief opening, attendees can sign up to present during a 60-minute time block. Once the agenda is built from these time blocks, participants choose which sessions to attend. The day will wrap up with whole-group reflection and processing.

This type of meeting structure is ideal for attendees wanting to ask questions, share expertise, and network with others seeking new strategies to facilitate learning.

Learn Now preconference attendees will be able to learn with Jim Knight, Marcia Tate, Lori Gracey, and Chris Yeager. These professional learning experts have agreed to facilitate at least one session as well as learn alongside others.

To extend the learning beyond the daylong session, registered participants can connect through social media before and after the Learn Now session. For more information, visit <http://learningforwardconference.org/annual13/sessions/sessiondetail.cfm?PID=3432>.



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With Learning Forward's member referral program, members can earn a \$35 gift card to the Learning Forward Bookstore by referring a friend or colleague to join Learning Forward.

Here's how it works: The applicant fills in the member's name, city, and state on the membership application form or mentions the member's name when joining by phone at 800-727-7288.

Current members will receive a \$35 gift card to the Learning Forward Bookstore for each new member who adds their information to his or her application. There is no limit to the gift cards members can receive for referring new members.

For questions or additional information, contact the Learning Forward Business Office at 800-727-7288 or office@learningforward.org.

LEARNING FORWARD CALENDAR

- Oct. 15:** Deadline to save \$50 on registration for 2013 Annual Conference in Dallas, Texas.
- Dec. 7-11:** Learning Forward's 2013 Annual Conference in Dallas, Texas.
- Jan. 31, 2014:** Deadline for proposals to present at Learning Forward's 2014 Annual Conference in Nashville, Tenn.
- March 15, 2014:** Last day to apply to join the next cohort of Learning School Alliance schools.
- March 15, 2014:** Last day to apply to join Academy Class of 2016.



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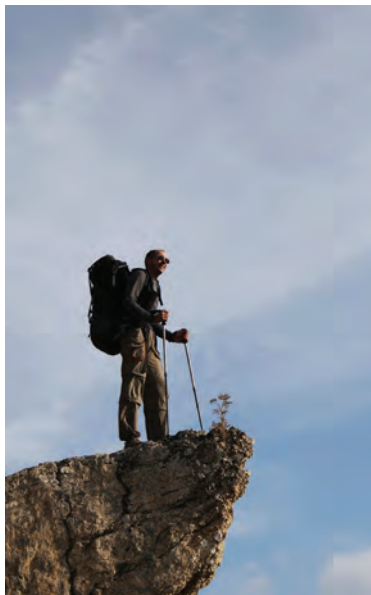
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THE VIEW FROM THE TOP

<http://bit.ly/1bMYDd3>

A report highlighting the perspectives of top-performing teachers gets this reaction from Learning Forward Director of Communications Tracy Crow:

“While it is nice that additional insights affirm the standards, and while we nod our heads at respondents’ unsurprising responses about

traditional professional development, what will it take for a more widespread shift to the kinds of adult learning that make a difference? Our top performers will strive to continuously improve. What are we offering to support them on their journey, and, just as importantly, how will we help every other teacher improve?”



SUMMER CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

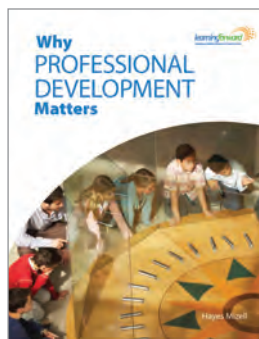
www.learningforward.org/learning-opportunities/summer-conference

Watch keynote highlights from Learning Forward’s Summer Conference in Minneapolis to reignite your passion. Jim Knight, University of Kansas, addresses the need for professional learning that holds teachers accountable. Michelle Shearer, 2011 National Teacher of the Year, describes what it takes to be a successful teacher. National Urban Alliance Executive Director Yvette Jackson discusses the pedagogy of confidence. Jaime Casap, Google Education Evangelist, talks about technology’s impact on education. And author Anthony Muhammad cautions that we must pay attention to building cultures that institutionalize relationships to keep lasting change.

GROUP SMARTS

www.learningforward.org/publications/learning-system

Teams have an intelligence of their own that is independent of the individual intelligence of the members. In other words, adding up the talent of each individual member doesn’t necessarily total the team’s ability to perform. In the summer 2013 issue of *The Learning System*, read how some groups are smarter than others, how you can select a smart team, and how to raise that team’s group IQ. Use the tool in this issue to develop ground rules that encourage behaviors that will help a group do its work and discourage behaviors that interfere with a group’s effectiveness.



FREE DOWNLOAD

www.learningforward.org/publications/recent-research-and-reports

Why Professional Development Matters is a great way to introduce parents, community members, and policymakers to high-quality professional learning and why it matters. The booklet, written in easy-to-follow Q-and-A format, is useful for helping audiences outside of education to understand this critical topic. Educators can share this free PDF document at board meetings and community gatherings or use it as an advocacy tool with

local, state, and federal policymakers.



Make Learning **VISIBLE** in Your School

EXCLUSIVELY
FROM
CORWIN

What is Visible Learning?



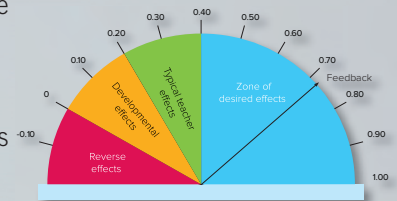
John Hattie

Visible Learning^{plus} is an in-depth school change model of professional learning based on the research of Professor John Hattie. This professional development seminar series allows school-based teams to systematically examine effective instructional practice across a school to impact student achievement.

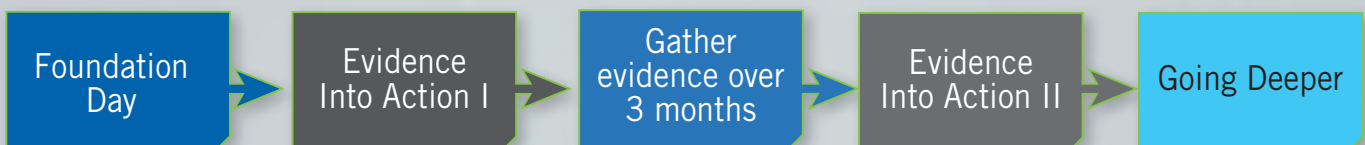
The Research Scope

John Hattie's work is based on his meta-analysis of more than **1000 research reviews** comprising more than **50,000 studies** involving more than **250 million students** around the world.

Hattie found that the **#1 most effective method for improving achievement** was by giving students 100% visibility into what they are learning and why.



The Visible Learning^{plus} Program



The Foundation Series

Foundation Seminar

Participants will discuss the most important messages from the Visible Learning research and understand what does—and doesn't—make a significant difference to student achievement.

Evidence Into Action I

Learn what evidence you should collect to know if you are a Visible Learning school. Participants will receive the Visible Learning Matrix and learn processes for gathering data.

Evidence Into Action II

Participants analyze the evidence gathered with the Visible Learning Matrix to determine school priorities and targets, and develop an action plan for making learning visible.

Going Deeper

Inside Series

For schools that have completed the Foundation Series, the Inside Series supports deep implementation of Visible Learning strategies throughout your school.

Collective Impact Series

This series of seminars helps school systems align leadership and professional learning programs to support the development of Visible Learning schools.

Coaching and Consulting

Build capacity within your school or district by developing your own school-change coaches or bringing certified Visible Learning consultants on site.

Learn how you can become a Visible Learning school. Call **800-831-6640** or visit www.Corwin.com/VisibleLearning.





What professional learning story will you tell at the end of the school year?

We have all heard these criticisms of professional development: Too many teachers complain it is ineffective and a waste of their time; too little research documents its impact on educator practice or student results; well-constructed and respected research studies are too complicated and expensive for people whose first responsibility is to run schools.

A challenge that comes to mind for me is: Because effective professional

learning is part of a larger continuous improvement system, it is difficult and expensive to isolate its effect on the system. So how do we talk with authority about professional

learning's impact on school improvement and student learning?

One of Learning Forward's three strategic priorities is impact and accountability. That means that we'll be providing not only resources and information that help you make an impact, but also resources to help you

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

document the impact of professional learning.

This is why Learning Forward is launching an effort this year called "Tell Your Story," which invites you to detail your professional learning journey and its results. We'll partner with organizations such as My Learning Plan and The Teaching Channel that have the capacity to help you capture the information that documents the impact of professional learning on your school, team, or individuals in the system.

Your stories will help build the case for why professional learning matters, how it makes a difference for educators and students, and why it merits the attention and investment of policymakers and education leaders alike.

Professional development is the best strategy we have for helping all educators improve their performance and helping all students achieve. Too frequently, we are distracted by those who would reallocate professional learning resources, including personnel and time, to other, sexier ideas. Professional learning requires serious and substantive commitment. When it is aligned with the Standards for Professional Learning, professional learning makes the level of difference schools require.

As you think about documenting your success with professional learning this year, I suggest this process:

- Think about how you will collect answers to these questions:
 - What professional learning will

you evaluate?

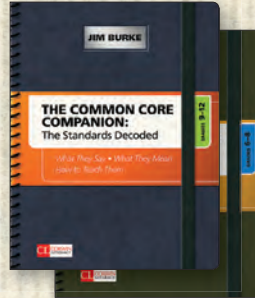
- What will educators learn and be able to do?
 - What data will be collected to show that educators' behaviors have changed?
 - What knowledge will students gain, and how will they demonstrate it?
 - Specify the professional learning plan, including content and strategies for building knowledge and skills. Describe how you will collaborate with others at the school to build collective responsibility and knowledge so that all other educators and students benefit.
 - Keep track of your growth. What benchmarks can you identify along the way to show progress?
 - Finally, share your results at the end of the year with your colleagues and community. Acknowledge the challenges and recognize your deeper expertise in advancing closer to your highest goals. Think about what will take you further next year. Imagine if, by the end of this school year, we have 100 stories to share, and hundreds more the next year. The professional learning landscape will shift, and your conversations and state and national conversations should shift as well.
- I hope that you take our challenge and join us in this effort. Call on Learning Forward for help in thinking through your plan — we are ready to assist you. ■



Harvey “Smokey” Daniels & Elaine Daniels

On that single method for transforming students from passive spectators into active learners

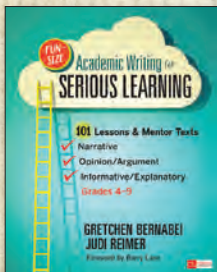
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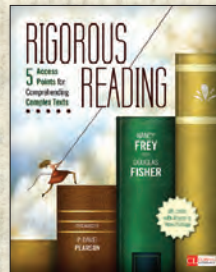
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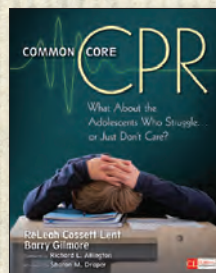
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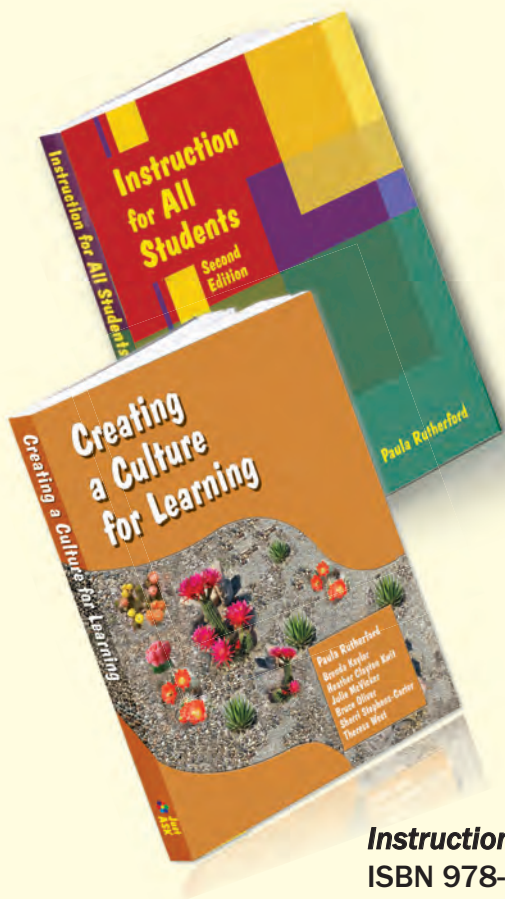
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