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# JSD

The  
Learning Forward  
Journal

**theme** THE EMERGING LEADER

DECEMBER 2013, VOLUME 34, NO. 6

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## Prioritizing your own learning when you lead others is a tough task

“Calgon, take me away!” I remember watching commercials for Calgon bath products and thinking, sigh, yes, when I’m an adult, I’ll need a soothing bubble bath to escape the stresses of daily life.

While I don’t downplay the power of a hot soak, talk of “me time” these days seems as outdated and simplistic as the images in those commercials. Of course we must strive for balance in attending to family, friends, community, career, and self. But do we have to make our own needs so public?

When it comes to prioritizing our own learning needs as leaders, it turns out that yes, we do need to make “me time” public. Education leaders, whether they are instructional coaches, superintendents, technical assistance providers, principals, or math department chairs, need as much opportunity for standards-based learning as the people they support.

When they are vocal and visible about the kinds of learning critical to their own success in supporting educators and students, leaders model the importance of continuous improvement for all. They also emphasize their part in assuming collective responsibility for the results of all learners, just as they would ask

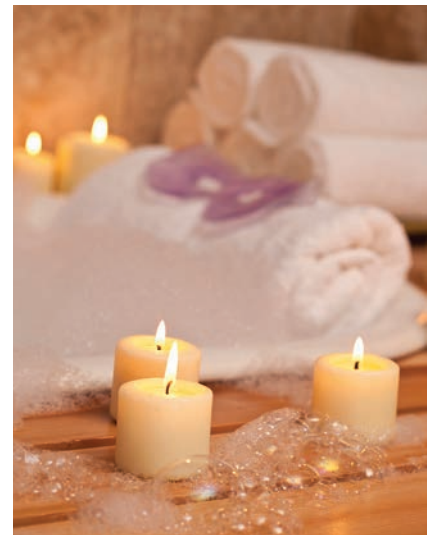
•  
**Tracy Crow ([tracy.crow@learningforward.org](mailto:tracy.crow@learningforward.org)) is director of communications for Learning Forward.**

teachers in their schools and systems to do. Advocating for effective professional learning helps everyone in the system.

When principals can talk about what they gain from the cross-school learning communities in which they participate, they show the teachers in their buildings how much they value effective collaboration. When mentors demonstrate their willingness to videotape their own classroom lessons and reflect in discussion about the results, novice teachers understand that even accomplished educators struggle and find new ways to meet student needs. And when leaders learn side-by-side with those in other roles, they emphasize their shared vision and goals.

For emerging leaders, this idea is particularly important. Shifting into new positions doesn’t mean that leaders grow out of the need for learning just because they are expected to have higher levels of expertise. Rather, they need to be supported to grow into their new roles and to understand what shifting expectations will require of them. While this may seem obvious, the temptation to sacrifice one’s own learning so that others have more opportunities becomes stronger as leaders climb the career ladder, even when those leaders know the importance of continuous learning.

Schools and systems are beginning to recognize that the effective implementation of college- and career-ready standards requires high-quality professional learning for teachers. Just



as important, however, will be the same opportunities for learning at every level of the system. New demands on teachers change demands on principals, new demands on principals change demands on those in central office positions, and on and on.

In this issue of *JSD*, we explore the role of emerging leaders, the part they play in advancing effective professional learning, and the support they need to succeed. As you read the issue, ask yourself: How will you indulge yourself as a learner? You need the professional learning attention as much as anyone. If you don’t make time for your own learning, why would you expect others to do the same? Soaking in days of learning isn’t shutting out the stresses of your daily life. It’s making sure you have the capacity to handle them. ■



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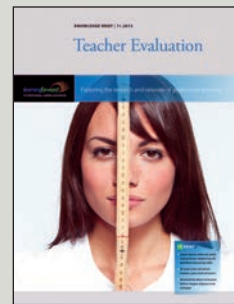
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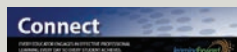


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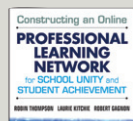
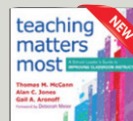
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## **PUBLIC ATTITUDES** The PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools

*PDK International & Gallup, 2013*

At a time when 45 states and the District of Columbia are phasing in new Common Core State Standards and the student tests that go with them, the American public increasingly does not believe that extensive standardized testing is improving public schools, the PDK/Gallup poll shows. Only 41% of those surveyed said they thought the standards would make American schools more competitive globally. At the same time, 95% of respondents want schools to teach critical thinking skills. The public says that increased testing is hurting American education more than helping. Most of those surveyed give the nation's public schools a C for quality even though they give their local schools an A or B. They express great trust and confidence in public school teachers and principals.

<http://pdkintl.org/programs-resources/poll>

## **SUMMER PROGRAMS**

### **Getting to Work on Summer Learning: Recommended Practices for Success**

*The Wallace Foundation, 2013*

This report offers guidance to school district leaders interested in launching or improving summer learning programs. The recommendations — start planning in January and stick to a firm enrollment deadline, among others — are based on evaluations of summer programs in six urban districts. The report also recommends: Familiarize teachers with the summer curriculum and how to teach it; help teachers tailor the curriculum for students with different aptitudes; provide ongoing support to implement the curriculum; include all instructional support staff in academic sessions; and give teachers time to set up their classrooms and prepare.

<http://bit.ly/15zQO4i>



## **COMMON CORE**

### **Year 3 of Implementing the Common Core State Standards: Professional Development for Teachers and Principals**

*Center on Education Policy, 2013*

Based on a spring 2013 survey of state education agency officials in Common Core-adopting states, this report provides information on state efforts to prepare teachers and principals. The report examines which entities are providing Common Core-related professional development services within the states, the estimated proportion of teachers and principals that have participated in such services, and the challenges that states face in preparing educators to teach a Common Core-aligned curricula.

[www.cep-dc.org/displayDocument.cfm?DocumentID=422](http://www.cep-dc.org/displayDocument.cfm?DocumentID=422)

## **EVALUATION REFORM**

### **Teacher Evaluation Playbook**

*Hope Street Group*

The website is a tool to provide strategy suggestions for effective educator evaluation reform to state policymakers while giving administrators, union leaders, and teachers suggestions on how they can get involved. The site, a service of national nonprofit Hope Street Group, describes the process, key players, and resources used to engage teachers around reinventing teacher evaluation. Though heavily focused on the work in Tennessee and Delaware, Hope Street Group plans to include best practices and lessons learned from other districts and states.

<http://playbook.hopestreetgroup.org>



## CHANGING TEACHER PRACTICE

### Teaching the Teachers: Effective Professional Development in an Era of High Stakes Accountability *Center for Public Education, 2013*

This report explores how districts can structure professional development so that teachers change their teaching practices and increase student learning. Among the findings: Professional development needs to emphasize practices that will turn students into critical thinkers; most professional development today neither changes teacher practice nor improves student learning; many districts don't track professional development spending; the most significant cost for districts will be purchasing time for teachers to spend in professional learning communities and with coaches; and support must address teachers' dual roles as technicians in researched-based practices and intellectuals developing teaching innovations.

[www.centerforpubliceducation.org/teachingtheteachers](http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/teachingtheteachers)



## FEEDBACK CONVERSATIONS

### Strategies for Enhancing the Impact of Post-Observation Feedback for Teachers *Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2013*

This brief examines the struggle to use post-observation conversations effectively to support and develop teachers. Combining a professional learning activity (feedback conversations) with an accountability-focused activity (performance evaluations) makes classroom observations a source of worry for teachers. The report recommends strategies for post-observation feedback conversations, including: Use listening strategies to ensure both participants feel heard and understood, make sure the teacher knows

exactly what is going to happen, start the conversation with a positive statement, encourage reflection, and ask teachers to share their concerns first.

<http://bit.ly/1cg90WZ>

## EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

### The Teacher and Leader Evaluation Roadmap *EducationCounsel, 2013*

Drawing on research and the experience of early adopter states, this report outlines a framework through which states can consider a limited number of emerging options for the numerous key questions, issues, and actions required for educator evaluation. A working draft, the report was written with awareness that evaluation systems are still developing and promising practices are still being tested. The report addresses four major elements: Establish foundations for action, design the instrument, establish systems for use, and ensure effective implementation and continuous improvement.

<http://bit.ly/180qAwK>

## JSD STAFF

Editor: Tracy Crow  
Managing editor: Sue Chevalier  
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## HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

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# 5 PRACTICES of EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALS

By Pamela Mendels

What exactly is it that effective principals do that ripples through classrooms and boosts learning, especially in failing schools? Since 2000, The Wallace Foundation has been trying to answer that question. A *Wallace Perspective* report that takes a look at the foundation's research and field experiences finds that five practices in particular seem central to effective school leadership (The Wallace Foundation, 2012):

When principals put each of these elements in place — and in harmony — principals stand a fighting chance of making a real difference for students.

**Reference**

**The Wallace Foundation. (2012, January).** *The school principal as leader: Guiding schools to better teaching and learning.* New York: Author.

**Source: Mendels, P. (2012, February).** The effective principal: 5 pivotal practices that shape instructional leadership. *JSD*, 33(1), 54-58. Available at [www.learningforward.org/docs/february-2012/mendels331.pdf](http://www.learningforward.org/docs/february-2012/mendels331.pdf).

- 1 Shape a vision of academic success for all students, one based on high standards.
- 2 Create a climate hospitable to education in order that safety, a cooperative spirit, and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail.
- 3 Cultivate leadership in others so that teachers and other adults assume their part in realizing the school vision.
- 4 Improve instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn at their utmost.
- 5 Manage people, data, and processes to foster school improvement.

**Get the report**

*The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning* is available free for download at <http://bit.ly/zcvOCB>.

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**CREATE YOUR OWN CAREER PATH**

New possibilities are emerging for many teachers who want to take on leadership roles but don't want to move into a principalship or central office position. Use these questions to explore possible activities and opportunities.

- What other roles, responsibilities, activities, or projects outside the classroom interest you as you consider your career path?
- What deeper skill sets would you like to pursue, and how will they help you on your journey?
- What types of opportunities for expanding your influence are available to you?
- What types of opportunities are not currently available that you would like to see available?

- How can you make the connection from your interests to student results?
- How can you make the connection from your interests to other benefits for the school?
- Who has a vested role in your interests, and how can they assist you?
- Who shares your desire for positive change in your areas of interest? How can you engage them as partners?
- What models do you see that might offer lessons for you?
- What steps can you take to make teachers more visible as leaders to influence change and impact your school or district's culture?



**Source:** Create your own career path. (2013, Spring). *The Leading Teacher*, 8(3), 6-7. Available at [www.learningforward.org/publications/leading-teacher](http://www.learningforward.org/publications/leading-teacher).



## Going beyond the classroom

Half of the teachers surveyed in *The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Challenges for School Leadership* (MetLife, 2012) are interested in a hybrid role that combines classroom teaching with other responsibilities, three times the number who are interested in becoming a principal.

Fewer than two in 10 (16%) teachers surveyed are at least somewhat interested in becoming a principal, including only 6% who are extremely or very interested in this option. In fact, most teachers (69%) are not at all interested in becoming a principal.

### Reference

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

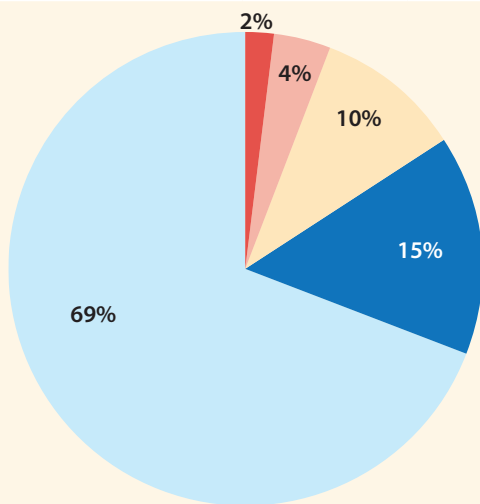
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The *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Challenges for School Leadership* is available free for download at

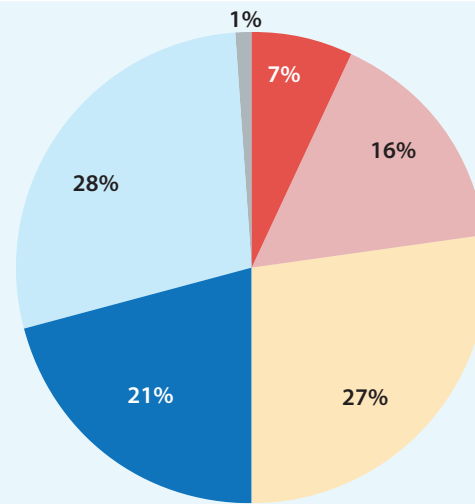
[www.metlife.com/assets/cao/foundation/MetLife-Teacher-Survey-2012.pdf](http://www.metlife.com/assets/cao/foundation/MetLife-Teacher-Survey-2012.pdf).

### TEACHER INTEREST IN NEW ROLE: HOW INTERESTED ARE YOU IN EACH OF THE FOLLOWING?

Becoming a principal



Teaching in the classroom part-time combined with other roles or responsibilities in your school or district



### KEY

Extremely interested

Very interested

Somewhat interested

Not very interested

Not at all interested

Don't know

### POWERFUL WORDS

“The next wave of teacher leadership is when teachers can incubate and execute bold ideas in both policy and pedagogy beyond schools, states, and even nations.”

— Center for Teaching Quality founder Barnett Berry, in “Charting new career paths for teacher leaders,” *The Leading Teacher*, Spring 2013. Available at [www.learningforward.org/publications/leading-teacher](http://www.learningforward.org/publications/leading-teacher).





# PARTNERS IN LEARNING

## TEACHER LEADERS DRIVE INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE

By Victoria Duff and M. René Islas

**N**ew educator evaluation systems demand a focus on effective teaching and learning while promoting the professional growth of all teachers.

Districts experiencing successful implementation of these systems recognize they must depend on teachers

and leaders to collaborate in building strong cultures of shared responsibility, support colleagues through the change process, and model and provide feedback on effective instructional practices that get results for students.

By identifying and leveraging the contributions of high-performing teachers as instructional leaders, problem solvers, and decision-makers to lead improvement at the classroom level, the system builds capacity for quality practice at all levels and builds internal expertise.



Numerous studies (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Louis & Marks, 1998; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004) have shown the positive effect that high-performing teachers can have on the practices of their peers. These master teachers or teacher leaders are influencers who can help articulate the look and feel of instructional excellence and its impact on student learning.

Working with colleagues in their schools, they have become a critical lever in building the capacity of peers to engage in a continuous cycle of learning and improvement.

#### LESSONS LEARNED IN PRACTICE

The 12 partnership districts in the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Supporting Effective Teaching Knowledge Development Initiative (see box at right) have spent the past two years building, modifying, and enhancing the roles and responsibilities of teacher leaders to strengthen the quality of school culture, improve the practice of teaching, and foster a deep commitment to professional growth.

In many of the districts, teacher leaders, working alongside school and district leaders, have been empowered to share expertise and build strong communities of learners. Formally and informally, they assist colleagues in solving instructional problems that surface in day-to-day work by challenging assumptions that

#### ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

Since 2012, Learning Forward's Center for Results has supported 12 high-profile school systems to leverage professional learning to improve educator effectiveness. Sites participating in the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation-funded network, called the Supporting Effective Teaching Knowledge Development Initiative, applied and collaboratively refined the framework and tools presented in the report, *Supporting Effective Teaching: Professional Learning Insights from 12 Leading Districts* (Duff & Islas, in press), from which this article is adapted.

Participating sites found the tools helpful in identifying gaps in existing professional learning, planning for future professional learning, and evaluating the impact of professional learning.

The full report offers an analysis of key lessons learned across the 12 sites. Participants identified these key concepts in discussion, reflection, and implementation of creating their learning systems:

1. Clarify the purposes of professional learning;
2. Identify roles and responsibilities for professional learning;
3. Create differentiated learning to meet all teachers' needs;
4. Monitor the impact of professional learning; and
5. Drive instructional excellence by supporting teacher leaders.

#### Reference

Duff, V. & Islas, M.R. (in press). *Supporting effective teaching: Professional learning insights from 12 leading districts*. Seattle, WA: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

#### ABOUT THE CENTER FOR RESULTS

Learning Forward's Center for Results supports education leaders in developing systems to improve educator effectiveness and student achievement. The center offers high-impact consulting and programs strictly aligned with Learning Forward's research and body of knowledge in effective professional learning to support deep implementation in schools. For more information, visit [www.learningforward.org/centerforresults](http://www.learningforward.org/centerforresults).

• **TOOL, p. 16. Guiding questions on teacher leadership**

may hinder growth, working to uncover student needs based on relevant data, and providing feedback based on the teacher effectiveness framework that improves instructional practice.

Teacher leadership is one arm of support needed to ensure teachers have access to learning opportunities that can transform how instruction takes place and the results students see in their own work. (See “Teacher leaders in Hillsborough County” below.)

As work in the districts progresses, six elements have emerged as key factors in cultivating the expertise of these master teachers and establishing multiple leadership opportunities to support colleagues:

1. District stakeholders identify the theory of action and vision to drive decisions for implementing teacher leader opportunities and the roles teacher leaders will play.
2. Central office staff, principals, and teachers work together to define a set of criteria for selection of teacher leaders.
3. School leaders engage in learning and networking opportunities and have access to essential resources to assist them in creating a school environment that advances teacher leadership.
4. Clear communication provides all stakeholders information about the benefits, successes, challenges, and outcomes of teacher leadership.
5. Teacher leaders participate in ongoing and regular learning to support their growth and development.
6. Teacher leadership opportunities, as with all professional

### TEACHER LEADERS IN HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Hillsborough County (Fla.) Public Schools offers leadership opportunities to teachers through its Empowering Effective Teachers program. Highly effective teachers may apply to become peer observers, mentors, or connectors.

Each teacher leader role has distinct responsibilities:

- **Peer observers** work with veteran teachers, observing teachers multiple times a year, providing feedback and input on a teacher’s evaluation.
- **Peer mentors** provide support to new teachers on a weekly basis by observing and providing feedback, modeling lessons, co-teaching and conferencing, and offering input on evaluation.
- **Peer connectors** offer support to a school for teachers who want to know more about the evaluation rubric and process.

For more information on the program, visit <http://communication.sdhc.k12.fl.us/empoweringteachers>.

learning, are regularly monitored for impact on teacher behavior and practices and student learning.

These elements offer a path for other districts to consider in leveraging the expertise that resides within each site.

### SET THE VISION

The 12 sites participating in the initiative have embraced the intentional use of teacher leaders and created multiple paths for leadership aligned to the vision and mission of the district’s goals for student learning.

Administrators and teachers collaborate to create a clear theory of action to distinguish the work of teacher leaders in supporting quality instructional practices. Thoughtful discussion and decisions about the many formal or informal roles and responsibilities of teacher leaders are the foundation for implementation.

Some teacher leaders may work on district, state, or national leadership teams to develop and advocate for policy, procedures and resources for adult learning, curriculum development, and effective assessment practices.

Others may act as instructional coaches, data coaches, mentors in the induction program, or department chairs who focus on providing feedback to improve classroom practice based on student and teacher needs.

Still others may develop and lead professional learning and support grade-level or content-area teams in engaging in deep learning around relevant problems of practice. And some may perform all these roles.

Whatever vision the district constructs for the role of teacher leader, the teacher leader’s role must be aligned to the district’s vision for student learning and must focus on improving classroom performance of all teachers.

### IDENTIFY THE CRITERIA

The selection of teacher leaders is driven by the premise that teachers leaders are those who “lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others toward improved educational practice” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). In other words, districts and schools should identify those teacher leaders who exemplify the following behaviors:

- Model and articulate best practice;
- Promote shared learning and continuous improvement as the path to high-performing schools and classrooms;
- Give, receive, and help others to act on feedback;
- Act as a bridge between understanding a new initiative and its implementation;
- Provide appropriate resources; and
- Foster positive relationships.

Teacher leaders who play these roles can provide transformative leadership that guides effective instruction, helping peers improve performance.



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### SUPPORT LEADERS

In districts participating in the initiative, central office provides the impetus for and sets policy, guidance, and resources to build strong teacher leadership models focused on the goals of the district.

In collaboration with other stakeholders, they have drafted the frame for the work of teacher leaders, collaborated with schools to provide the supports and time for teacher leaders to do their work, and monitored the successes and challenges of the program.

Teacher leadership thrives in schools where principals and other administrators nurture implementation and believe that distributing leadership maintains a focus on supporting instructional practice and student learning. These leaders establish expectations for outcomes and how colleagues will work together.

However, school leaders, whose work is both instructional and managerial, need the assistance of central office colleagues to effectively navigate the implementation of new roles for teacher leaders. As they lead to build leadership in others, principals will need time for their own learning through principal communities or networks of learners.

A principal, as the lead learner, must build his or her own knowledge and competencies in planning for and implementing new roles for teachers and the professional learning that will develop leadership skills in others.

### COMMUNICATE THE WORK

Communicating the expectations for and benefits of how teacher leaders interact in formal or informal ways within the system has been essential to success in the partnership sites.

The use of websites, Moodles, wikis, guidance documents, FAQs, and other digital avenues allows for transparency of the process. Principals, teacher leaders, and colleagues need absolute clarity on the roles teacher leaders will assume and how these efforts will be supported in the reform process.

Clearly identifying how teacher leadership roles will strengthen the existing culture and foster growth and improvement in practice paves the way for creating effective collaborative professional learning structures whose focus is improved student learning.

### BUILD SUPPORT

Teacher leaders need intensive support to maintain a high level of performance. The 12 sites participating in the initiative found that it is imperative that teacher leaders be provided sufficient time to engage successfully with the work they are doing, have access to continuous content-based learning, engage with peers to share learning and reflect on successes and challenges, and receive regular feedback that guides revisions to their practice.

The daily learning platform is found in classrooms they observe, team discussions they facilitate, and the give-and-take of

the feedback loops they use.

Maintaining a strong connection to classroom practice ensures teacher leaders can monitor their own ability to translate effective practice into positive student outcomes and promotes trust among their colleagues.

### MONITOR IMPACT

Monitoring the impact of teacher leadership on a change in teacher behaviors and practices linked to student learning is critical to advance the process.

In setting a strong course for teacher leaders, districts want evidence of their impact in classrooms and data about areas where modifications of the program may be needed. Across all the participating sites, this element continues to be the most elusive element to implement and is an ongoing goal for the program.

### PARTNERS FOR EXCELLENCE

A recent study on teacher leadership published by the Aspen Institute reminds us that “the dynamism of teacher leadership serves as a lever for recruiting and retaining top talent, strengthening the most effective teachers, helping other teachers improve, distributing leadership, and experimenting with new ways of organizing instruction so that teaching roles are differentiated and the teachers with proven ability reach more students” (Curtis, 2013). As district and school leaders learned in the 12 participating systems, teacher leaders are vital partners in advancing schoolwide professional growth when they are carefully supported and working toward a commonly held vision.

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**Victoria Duff (victoria.duff@learningforward.org) is a senior consultant and M. René Islas (rene.islas@learningforward.org) is director of Learning Forward’s Center for Results. ■**



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### GUIDING QUESTIONS ON TEACHER LEADERSHIP

**T**eacher leadership can promote deeper learning of all educators tied to improved student achievement. Use the following questions to guide a discussion to articulate the intended outcomes for leveraging the knowledge and skills of teacher leaders.

<b>1</b>	<p>What is the district’s vision for implementing a teacher leadership model?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who will help determine the vision?</li> <li>• What expertise resides in the district to meet the vision?</li> <li>• How is the vision aligned to student learning goals?</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<p>How will the district leverage the expertise of high-performing teachers to facilitate improvement in instruction and support district priorities (e.g. educator effectiveness, college- and career-ready standards, assessment literacy)?</p>
<b>3</b>	<p>What specific roles and responsibilities will teacher leaders take on in various efforts?</p>
<b>4</b>	<p>What criteria will be used to determine how teacher leaders will be selected?</p>
<b>5</b>	<p>How will school leaders be supported in developing the culture for teacher leadership?</p>
<b>6</b>	<p>How will teacher leaders be supported in their work?</p>
<b>7</b>	<p>How will the intentional use of teacher leadership be communicated?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the expectations for leaders?</li> <li>• What are the expectations for teacher leaders?</li> <li>• How will teachers work with and share learning with teacher leaders?</li> <li>• What are the benefits of teacher leadership?</li> <li>• How will challenges be addressed?</li> </ul>
<b>8</b>	<p>How will the teacher leadership program be monitored? How will results be used to make improvements?</p>





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# TEACHERS RALLY AROUND WRITING

SHARED LEADERSHIP TRANSFORMS LOW-PERFORMING COLORADO ELEMENTARY

By Dana Frazee, Kay Frunzi, and Heather Hein

**E**merging leaders across the country accept principal positions with courage and conviction about what’s right for their teachers and their students, and they quickly learn that the task at hand cannot be accomplished alone.

To improve the quality of instruction and the achievement of all students, effective school leaders

“develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning,” according to the Leadership standard of Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011). Creating a team of teachers to share leadership — a dynamic process of mutual influence, responsibility, and accountability for achieving collective goals — is essential.

This was the task of a first-time principal and his staff

at Sedalia Elementary in Sedalia, Colo., south of Denver. Situated in Douglas County, a flourishing, mostly suburban area with one of the highest-performing and wealthiest school districts in the country, Sedalia Elementary faces challenges most of its peer schools don't: A third of its students in 2010 received free/reduced lunch, a quarter were English language learners (ELLs), and the mobility rate was higher than average. In 2010, the school scored below the district average across the board, and at or below the state average in grades 3-6.



George Boser

Teachers at Sedalia kept to themselves and did things their own way. They are dedicated to their students and work hard, but until recently, they hadn't been focused as a staff and didn't hold themselves accountable for how well — or poorly —

their students perform.

All of that changed when George Boser became principal in 2010. Intent on making a difference, Boser accepted the position because it was a low-performing school where achievement was stagnating for some students.

He brought with him strong beliefs about school improvement and an ambitious plan for how to do it: He planned to get to the root causes of the achievement gap at Sedalia, and then make the necessary changes in a sys-

tematic and systemic way. He wanted to transform the culture of the school into one of high expectations and shared responsibility, aligning all professional learning to a continuous improvement process.

First, Boser had to convince staff the importance of sharing leadership — and that they, not the students, needed to change. “To continue teaching the same way while expecting student achievement to improve is not feasible,” he told them.

### SHARING LEADERSHIP

Boser asked teachers about their hopes and dreams for students. Together, they identified barriers to achievement progress and then categorized concerns and challenges into three types: school processes, perceptions, and student learning. Examples included everything from lack of student motivation and cultural awareness to inconsistent instructional strategies and a large number of individualized educational plans.

Boser asked staff to think about addressing these barriers with questions such as: How are we going to align instructional practices with our goals? How can we hold high expectations for all students and for one another? How will we effectively work with our growing ELL population?

The next step was to assemble a leadership team — something Sedalia hadn't had before. Boser believed in fostering the strengths of the staff in order to develop a



**Sedalia Elementary School**  
 Sedalia, Colo.  
 Grades: **K-6**  
 Enrollment: **274**  
 Staff: **42**  
 Racial/ethnic mix of students:  
 White: **62.2%**  
 Nonwhite: **36.8%**  
 Limited English proficient: **19%**  
 Languages spoken: **English, Spanish**  
 Free/reduced lunch: **50%**  
 Special education: **14%**  
 Mobility rate: **31%**  
 Contact: **George Boser**, principal  
 Email: **george.boser@dcsdk12.org**

**Sedalia Elementary School in Sedalia, Colo., experienced a revolution in leadership from traditional to shared.**

## TRADITIONAL VS. SHARED LEADERSHIP

TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP	SHARED LEADERSHIP
Leadership is defined by position. The principal is the leader.	Leadership is defined by people’s acceptance of mutual responsibility and accountability. People take on leadership roles, depending on the situation and their strengths.
The leader solves problems and provides answers for others.	People work together to solve problems, find answers, and improve results.
The leader is seen as independent of followers. There is an emphasis on the differences between leaders and followers in terms of skills and other characteristics.	There is a sense of interdependence and recognition that all staff members have strengths and expertise that contribute to their leadership ability.
Communication tends to be formal and focuses on transmitting information from the leader to followers. Information flow is often restricted.	Communication is two-way and focused on developing shared meaning. There is an emphasis on open and honest communication and free flow of information.
The leader develops the vision; others must buy into it.	Everyone is responsible for promoting a common sense of purpose and a focus on collective goals.
The leader may or may not solicit input, depending on the situation, before making a decision. The leader bears responsibility for all major decisions.	Decision-making processes are clearly defined. Those affected by a decision are involved in making it. Everyone has a stake in making effective decisions and producing positive outcomes.
The leader is responsible for leading and managing change initiatives and their effects on stakeholders.	The leader is responsible for leading and managing change initiatives and their effects on stakeholders.
The leader monitors the quality and results of instruction.	Everyone shares responsibility for collaboratively monitoring the quality and results of instruction.

© McREL 2009. Used with permission.

can-do attitude toward achievement, and he wanted the leadership team to reflect that belief.

The first step in developing shared leadership is to identify a process and criteria to select a school team that represents the rest of the school staff. This ensures that the leadership team members are highly respected in the school and have the capacity to lead. Teams are generally multigenerational and reflective of a school’s cultural makeup, usually with a cross-section of experience and skill level.

The school improvement leadership team at Sedalia included one teacher from each grade level, a special education teacher, an ESL teacher, and a librarian-teacher. Having a teacher from each grade made the team unusually large, but the concept of shared leadership was unusual for Sedalia, whose independent teachers were comfortable with traditional leadership roles and were skeptical of the concept of shared leadership (see table above).

### FINDING THE RIGHT MODEL

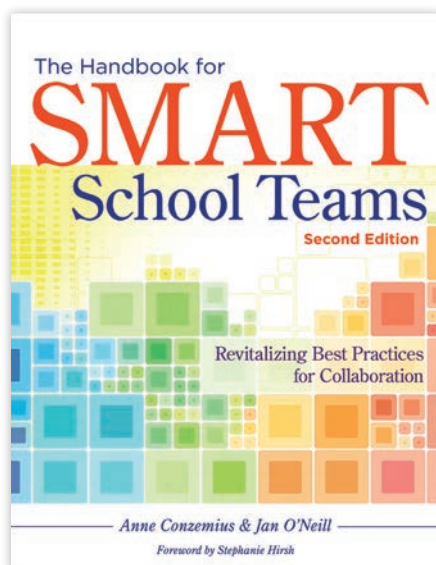
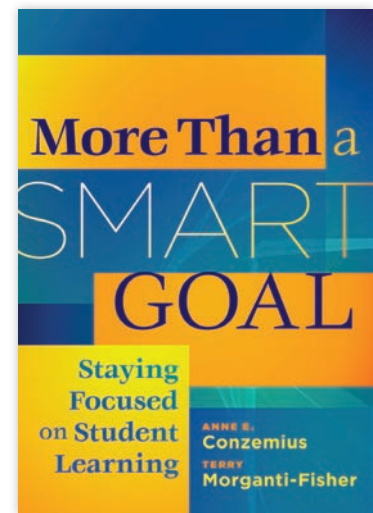
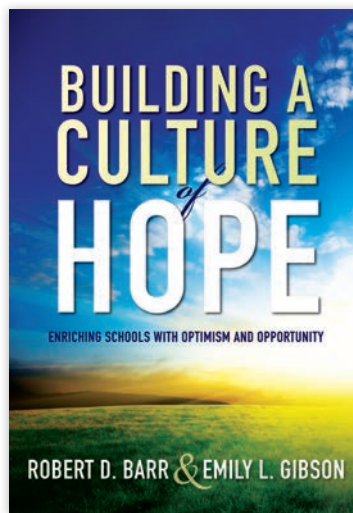
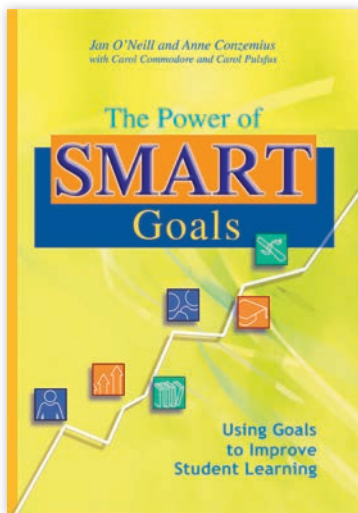
To harness the talents of his novice leadership team and make teacher-led change a reality, Boser realized he would need the right structures and processes to guide them.

Boser selected a continuous improvement model, Success in Sight, developed by McREL, a nonprofit education research, development, and service organization based in Denver. Sedalia became a demonstration school for Success in Sight, and professional learning led by a McREL consultant began in August 2010.

First, the group clearly defined the leadership team’s roles and responsibilities. The team’s primary role was to lead the school forward in student achievement, and team members were responsible for leading the development, implementation, and monitoring of the school improvement plan.

Using this plan as a guide, the team was to lead the staff in carrying out manageable improvement initiatives that would improve educator effectiveness and student results immediately

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and lead to larger, more significant change initiatives over time.

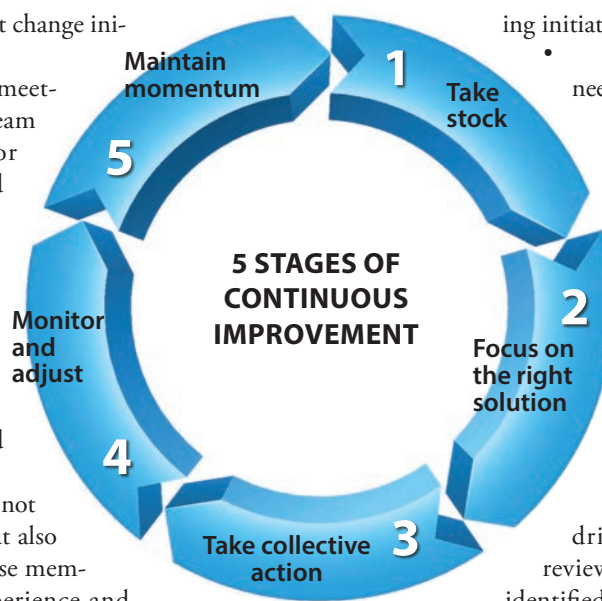
At one of the group’s initial meetings, Boser and the leadership team developed operating norms for meetings. These norms helped develop members’ expertise in working together and building shared vision for collective action. While such operating procedures are nothing new, they are more flexible than norms of the past — teams regularly monitor and adjust them as needed around commonly understood terms.

Norms are particularly helpful not only for novice teacher leaders but also for multigenerational teams, whose members have differing levels of experience and expertise. For example, if one norm is “we always respect each other,” the team discusses exactly what that means and what actions demonstrate respect and disrespect as well as what happens if the norm is not honored. Such a discussion may lead to a larger discussion about checking assumptions and how that applies to other norms.

### CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The continuous improvement process that the Sedalia team adopted includes structured professional learning, site-based leadership team development, and staff development — while at the same time identifying and solving instructional issues identified by student, staff, and district data. The process guides all school improvement initiatives and includes the following components:

- Use data to identify areas for improvement;
- Establish school goals for achievement;
- Align professional learning with goals;
- Take collective action by implementing targeted learn-



ing initiatives; and

- Monitor and adjust initiatives as needed.

Each improvement initiative follows five stages: Take stock, focus on the right solution, take collective action, monitor and adjust, and maintain momentum.

The leadership team applied this process to a manageable, systemic improvement experience that includes all the parts of a major school improvement initiative.

#### 1. Take stock.

The leadership team used a data-driven decision-making process to review the school’s assessment data and identified the area of most pressing need for improvement. The team identified writing as the area it wanted to address and set a nine-week timeline with schoolwide and grade-level measurable goals for writing achievement.

#### 2. Focus on the right solution.

The leadership team identified and prioritized possible causes for students’ writing problems. Team members brainstormed strategies to address the problem. After researching the best models available, the group chose the Writing Workshop method of instruction and focused its first initiative on helping students improve word choice in their writing.

#### 3. Take collective action.

The leadership team developed a comprehensive plan to implement its strategy for helping students improve word choice in their writing. The team used specific steps in teaching academic vocabulary, identified as Tier 2 in the Common Core State Standards, and made an implementation timeline.

### 10 STEPS FOR INITIATING SHARED LEADERSHIP

1. Assemble a representative team of teachers and support staff as your leadership team.
2. Decide on the team’s key areas of responsibilities.
3. Set norms for working together.
4. Decide how the team will make decisions.
5. Schedule team meeting dates.
6. Establish roles for each meeting: facilitator, timekeeper, recorder, and process observer.
7. Use an agenda template that includes: the team’s norms, the team’s responsibilities, the meeting roles, and outcomes for the meeting.
8. Use a timed agenda.
9. Set up a communication chain: Each team member is responsible for communicating to a certain group of staff members all the decisions made in the meeting and for seeking input from that same group for future agenda items.
10. As a team, present all the decisions made in steps 1-9 to the entire staff.

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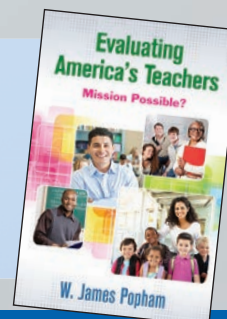
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To ensure schoolwide buy-in, the team planned how to involve the entire staff in developing and agreeing on the implementation plan.

Recognizing the need to support staff in teaching academic vocabulary explicitly and with fidelity, team members asked the McREL consultant to provide professional learning on research-based vocabulary instruction. Then they taught the rest of the staff what they learned during professional development days. This train-the-trainer model empowered the team in leading initiatives and sustaining change.

“The best professional development is that which shows teachers how to effectively make a change or implement a strategy and what the change or strategy actually looks like in the classroom,” said Boser. “Who is better to do that than those who teach in your school to your students?”

#### 4. Monitor and adjust.

As teachers began implementing the model, the leadership team conducted walk-throughs and collected observational data on which components of vocabulary instruction the teachers were doing well and ones they needed to reteach to ensure fidelity and consistency. Team members also videotaped themselves using the model so staff could discuss the practices in the video to improve their instruction.

The leadership team collaborated with staff to create writing rubrics based on the Common Core State Standards. School-wide writing assessments were put in place to help monitor student progress, and teachers came together to score writing prompt tasks, focusing their scoring on word choice.

#### 5. Maintain momentum.

Based on internal school writing prompt data, students’ word choice skills increased, generating a quick win for everyone. “I have learned how powerful it is to be aligned as a school community,” said leadership team member Emmie Rooney, a 2nd-grade teacher. “Nothing works in isolation — no more closing our doors and having a ‘this works for me’ attitude,” she said.

At the end of the nine-week timeline, the leadership team celebrated with the staff for their collective efforts in meeting the goal. The leadership team led staff members in planning how they would sustain the word choice writing initiative.

Teachers saw that even minor changes in how they taught improved student achievement significantly, which helped them feel more confident about what students were capable of learning and motivated them to continue the changes in their teaching. Other team members echoed Rooney:

- From a 3rd-grade teacher: “Private practice needs to be a way of the past. We need to evaluate what about us is of value to keep and what needs to change.”
- From a 5th-grade teacher: “This continuous improvement model has allowed fellow educators to begin to clarify the

**“We now believe we can and will get better. We’ve come together as a purposeful community focused on achievement, which allows us to move from being individually good to collectively great.”**

— George Boser

importance and effectiveness of research-based pedagogical approaches and alignment of expectations and common language to positively impact the learning of children.”

- From an ELL teacher: “I have developed a much greater respect for and understanding of the process of analyzing and interpreting data and using such data as a tool to implement research-based instructional strategies within the classroom.”

#### RESULTS FOR STUDENTS

Student results demonstrate the impact of shared leadership. In one year, students in grades 4-6 showed improvement in their proficient or advanced scores on the state writing assessment. For 4th graders, scores increased from 44% to 51%; for 5th graders, from 56% to 64%; and for 6th graders, from 53% to 72%.

The leadership team continues to learn how to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of improvement strategies, and the staff continues to implement writing initiatives. Three years after Boser became principal, professional learning, shared leadership, and continuous improvement have become part of daily life at Sedalia.

“We now believe we can and will get better,” said Boser. “We’ve come together as a purposeful community focused on achievement, which allows us to move from being individually good to collectively great.”

The school plans improvement initiatives in research-based instructional strategies and strategies specific to English language learners and literacy in the content areas. By sharing leadership for continuous improvement, high expectations, and shared responsibility for student achievement, Sedalia is well on its way to becoming the kind of school its principal and teachers want it to be.

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**Dana Frazee (dfrazee@mcrel.org) and Kay Frunzi (kfrunzi@mcrel.org) are principal consultants and Heather Hein (hhein@mcrel.org) is a writer/editor at McREL in Denver, Colo. ■**





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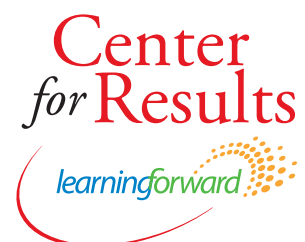
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# CRITICAL CONDITIONS

WHAT TEACHER LEADERS NEED TO BE EFFECTIVE IN SCHOOL

By Jill Harrison Berg,  
Christina A. Bosch,  
and Phomdaen Souvanna

The Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate program was designed in 2010 to build the capacity of Boston's teachers to be stronger professional resources for one another, their schools, and district reform. To this end, the program's key strategy has been supporting experienced teacher leaders to design and facilitate graduate-level leadership development courses for their peers.

To date, more than 100 teacher leaders holding roles such as team leader, content coach, data facilitator, or mentor have participated in this teacher-led professional learning to build the leadership skills needed to be effective in these roles.

A second, equally important strategy has been to study the experiences of these teacher leaders in order to identify the conditions most critical to their success and



to devise tools that can increase the impact these roles have on teaching and learning.

Program participants complete an online exit slip at the end of every course session. In addition to providing feedback on context, process, and content of each session — foundational components of Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011) — the exit slips provide an opportunity for participants to think about what might make it easy or hard to put their skills to use in their schools.

Analyzing data gathered from spring 2011 to fall 2012, program leaders saw clear patterns emerging in the contextual conditions teacher leaders perceived as critical to their effectiveness. Four conditions were salient in their responses: a common vision of shared leadership, clarity around authority, trust, and time.

## SHARED LEADERSHIP

Principals regularly assign teachers to roles that are vital to school improvement, such as team leader, content coach, data facilitator, or mentor. While these teacher leaders may each have their own vision of how their work within their teams will contribute to improvement, they recognize the need to understand how that vision coordinates with work at the school level as well. In schools where teacher leaders and their administrators share a common vision for shared leadership, teacher leaders feel they have more traction for making a difference through their roles.

Teacher leaders in the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate program reported that when their efforts were explicitly aligned with a schoolwide plan, they experienced increased collegial support, trust, and collaboration. This was true within their teacher teams and for the school overall. Not only did “everything seem to run smoothly,” as one teacher described it, but teacher leaders were more likely to feel confident, motivated,

## GUIDING QUESTIONS ABOUT

# SHARED LEADERSHIP

Structured discussions that focus on alignment across levels of school leadership can help teacher leaders make a bigger difference in their roles.

- Do key leaders in your school have the same vision of improvement?
- Do they have a shared conception of what it takes to get there?
- Does your school have opportunities for leaders to talk about this to get on the same page?

# AUTHORITY

Through dialogue with other school leaders, teacher leaders can fulfill their responsibilities with a clear sense of authority.

- Has the leadership team thought about how leadership is distributed in the school and whether strategic actions can improve how this is done?
- Do key leaders in your school sometimes find they are duplicating efforts or stepping on toes?
- Is there a place to talk about this?

# TRUST

To achieve school improvement objectives, leaders must collaborate in coordinating their approaches to promoting trust within a school.

- Do key leaders in your school discuss openly the importance of trust?
- Is trust an issue in your school? Do you know how to tell if it is or is not?
- Do leaders share responsibility for monitoring and promoting trust?

# TIME

School administrators and teacher leaders must consult together in order to devise strategies for maximizing the use of available time.

- Have key leaders in your school already reviewed the literature for creative ideas at work in schools to address this pervasive issue?
- Have leaders explored the ways that our time is influenced by our values?
- Do leaders have a clear idea of what responsibility they have to ensure that time is being used effectively?
- Do leaders have strategies for improving the use of time?

and satisfied in their roles.

Another teacher noted additional benefits: “Working together to create a common vision can improve collaboration and trust.” These are prerequisites for shared ownership of student learning results.

However, where schools lacked a coordinated vision of leadership, teachers were acutely aware of dysfunction within their teams, and they were frequently frustrated that they weren’t as effective as they felt they could be.

Teacher leaders who reported that their principals made shared leadership a priority in their approach to schoolwide issues explained that one way they accomplished this was through frequent and open communication of goals. They would, for example, ensure there was a clear, common goal and vision for staff involvement and engagement, content and structure of professional learning, organization of staff meeting time, protocols for data use, and systematic support and time for inquiry and reflection.

Teacher leaders regularly work with colleagues to gain consensus around a common vision and goals within their own teams. However, teacher leaders can make a bigger difference for students when this vision is aligned across all levels of school leadership. To accomplish this, school leaders — both administrators and teacher leaders — must take time to engage in discussions about what shared leadership means and looks like in their school.

### AUTHORITY

When teacher leaders are asked to assume roles and responsibilities beyond their classrooms, many agree to do so because they believe they can make a bigger difference in their schools. They have a tremendous sense of agency and the will to lead school improvement efforts. Many of them, however, experience a lack of clarity around their authority as teacher leaders.

Shared ownership benefits all. As one teacher noted, “Leadership opportunities increase a sense of ownership in teaching and learning, and it is a great feeling for teachers to know that they have helped improve student performance. It motivates teachers to want to do more, so it is a great benefit for the administration.” Ultimately, these efforts to improve teaching and learning benefit students. Yet it is not uncommon for teachers to be stymied by the lack of clarity about their authority within these roles. While some are undeterred by this lack of clarity, preferring to ask for forgiveness instead of permission, most teacher leaders find this to be an unnecessary source of stress.

Teacher leaders in the program indicated that clarity around authority was crucial to fulfilling their responsibilities confidently and feeling positive about their roles. Many teacher leaders want the freedom to manage teams, wishing administrators would show more faith and confidence in the teacher leaders without

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

To read more about the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate program, see “Checks and balances: Built-in data routines monitor the impact of Boston’s teacher leader program” in the October 2013 issue of *JSD*, available at [www.learningforward.org/publications/jsd](http://www.learningforward.org/publications/jsd).

micromanaging. Others appreciated the support they received in these areas. Still others described hesitating to take a needed action because they were unsure of the boundaries of their authority. They weren’t all looking for autonomy; they were looking for clarity. One participant said, “It is very frustrating when you know your potential and skills aren’t being used efficiently.”

Through dialogue, administrators and teacher leaders can clarify expectations and preferences. Administrators can support teacher leaders’ sense of authority by initiating a conversation in which they determine together the expected contributions of the teacher leader within the wider distribution of leadership and the actions that will be taken to ensure follow-through and accountability for all members of the leadership team.

A conversation with school administrators would help teacher leaders know that they are meeting agreed-upon expectations and their work is considered useful. To achieve a shared understanding of responsibilities and authority, as one teacher said, “a truly open and honest dialogue and intent is crucial.”

### TRUST

Teacher leaders from the program recognize that trust creates a culture where information and ideas are more readily shared. This is important not merely because it enables teachers to share expertise and learn from one another’s experiences, but because it supports shared vision and aligned efforts.

One teacher leader said, “The work around building trust definitely help[s] with improving the various teams’ capacities to collaboratively work to improve student learning.”

Trust is a key tool in teamwork that allows teams to get more done in the long run.

Additionally, some teacher leaders described the ways in which trust facilitates professional growth: Trust is essential for truthful evaluation feedback as well as for creating the structures and space for teacher leaders to grow. Trust provides a foundation for the feedback and transparency needed to facilitate clearly defined authority and cooperation. Indeed, trust, authority, and shared vision interact to create high- and low-stakes situations that either inspire or inhibit collaboration.

Many of the interactions that are most conducive to school improvement require trust, yet these cannot be safely initiated with-

**FREE DOWNLOAD:** The leadership discussion guides are available free for download at [www.teachers21.org/TLR](http://www.teachers21.org/TLR).

out all levels of leadership on board. Teacher leaders and other school leaders should be aligned in their approaches to promoting trust within a school and their commitment to building trust among themselves. This requires conversation.

## TIME

Time is the most commonly cited constraint by teacher leaders in the program. They struggle with having sufficient time to do all they feel they need to do, and they view this issue in two ways. Teacher leaders recognize that since time is a limited resource, existing time must be maximized. At the same time, they do want more time for the background work that is needed to support effective practice through their roles.

Teacher leaders in the program realize the importance of using existing time well. In their courses, they were concerned with how meetings can be organized so that participants are prepared, priorities are discussed up front, conversations are focused, and adequate time is allowed for reflection. They helped one another with this challenge by exchanging strategies, such as asking team members to complete surveys before meeting or asking them to draft a vision statement or goals before meeting so they can launch right into discussion when the meeting begins. But they often found the use of time in their meetings was not fully in their control. One teacher lamented, “Our common planning time is already booked with agendas.”

Of course, planning to use time well takes time, too. One teacher pined for “having enough time to create the agenda and organize the materials before the meeting.” The need to create more time seems inescapable. In addition to having time to prepare for the meetings they lead, these teacher leaders repeatedly expressed the desire for more time to engage in professional learning with colleagues, connect around collaborative planning, observe each other’s teaching, and reflect upon teaching or learning data.

One teacher said, “It is hard to put these systems in place at school because there is always that lack of time. The meetings fly by, and it is nearly impossible to meet with my team during the school day.” Further, time is required to prepare colleagues for this work. As one teacher explained, there is a “need for the group to develop other skills before they are able to sanely discuss the data or to look at student work.”

While some leadership teams are experimenting with innovative solutions that increase the time available for teacher leadership work, it’s also worthwhile for teacher leaders and school leaders to consult together to maximize how existing time is used.

## ENTERING THE DISCUSSION

Conversations about these conditions are necessary, but significant barriers exist. Teacher leaders are often unsure how to approach principals about these topics. Principals do not always recognize these areas as ones that call for conversation or have not thought about how to enter into these discussions.

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate program was established in 2010 through a federally funded Teacher Quality Partnership grant that included the Boston Plan for Excellence, Boston Teacher Residency, Boston Public Schools, and the University of Massachusetts, Boston. The program is now led by a governing board of teachers and has expanded beyond Boston through a partnership with Teachers21.

In response, Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate program leaders used what they learned from teacher leaders to create a series of discussion guides designed to generate productive, focused conversations among school leadership teams — administrators and teacher leaders together — and to result in more efficient and effective use of teacher leadership as a resource for reform.

The four guides address the conditions critical to teacher leaders’ success: shared leadership, authority, trust, and time. Each guide has four parts that users may adapt based on their needs, available time, and range of participants. The first segment offers the evidence-based rationale for the guide. After reviewing this, users can skim the materials and agree on how to adapt the guide to their needs.

Part two includes a short text and discussion questions to help teams consider the issue’s scope and complexity. Next is an action-oriented task that allows users to explore the topic together and develop shared understandings before outlining next steps. Finally, a structure guides users to reflect on progress and process.

Organizational theorists point out that “to achieve collective interpretation, people need time to understand the reasoning behind different perspectives and to question and think about that reasoning” (Collinson & Cook, 2007, p. 78). These guides can support teacher leaders, their principals, and the other leaders with whom they work to discuss and take action toward creating conditions that maximize leadership capacity.

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Jill Harrison Berg (jhberg@teachers21.org) is director and Christina A. Bosch (cab000@mail.harvard.edu) and Phomdaen Souvanna (psouvanna@brandeis.edu) are former interns for the Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate program. ■



Teachers, from left, Jennifer Levy, Holly Procida, Laura Sullivan, and Amy Gamarello work together at the Northern Valley (N.J.) Coaching Academy in July 2012.

# EMPOWERMENT ZONE

COACHING ACADEMY PRIMES TEACHERS TO BECOME INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS

By Linda Mayer

**A**veteran high school teacher, a mid-career 2nd-grade teacher, and a newly tenured middle school teacher carefully considered their applications for the Northern Valley Schools Curriculum Consortium's new Coaching Academy. A bit uncertain about what this opportunity could mean for them, the teachers submitted their applications along with recommendations from their administrators.

Within the consortium, which encompasses seven K-8 districts, two high schools, and a regional special needs center in northern New Jersey, the groundwork for a culture of teacher leadership had been growing over many years. While teachers and administrators had engaged in professional learning and interdistrict collaboration, coaching presented a new leadership opportunity.

These newly trained coaches would work with early career teachers. Teacher demand for coaching increased with an expansion of the regional new teacher induction program, evolving from a one-year course to a three-year sequence of professional learning.

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The new teacher induction program provides an effective learning design for teachers to enhance and refine their practice early in their careers. In response to the need for more coaches throughout the three-year program, and building on the knowledge that there is a greater likelihood that teacher practice will change if coaching is ongoing and directly related to classroom instruction (Rivera, Burley, & Sass, 2004), the Coaching Academy was born in July 2012.

### **INCREASE CLASSROOM SUPPORT**

The Coaching Academy's goal was to build a cadre of instructional coaches who could provide increased classroom support for teachers to navigate 21st-century educational demands. The instructional leadership team for this initiative included two regional office administrators, two instructional coaches, and one principal.

Inspiration for the Coaching Academy came from the knowledge and experiences shared by several leadership team members at the Learning Forward Academy, an extended professional learning experience in which members work collaboratively to gain knowledge to solve significant student learning problems in their schools, districts, or organizations.

Planning began with developing a common vision for a coaching structure that would be a growth model from the already established and embedded practice of coach-educators working exclusively for the regional office.

### **'A WIN-WIN FOR ALL INVOLVED'**

Administrative support was apparent right from the start. "Teacher-to-teacher coaching is the answer we've been looking for," said Superintendent Michael Fox. "This is a win-win for all involved. New teachers are given the opportunity for embedded coaching, and our more veteran teachers are embarking on a new level of teacher leadership."

The instructional leadership team designed a plan whereby trained coaches would be released from their teaching assignments for at least two days a year. Robert Price, director of curriculum and instruction, said that starting the program with two days of released time represented a huge culture shift.

Each coach was assigned to see two to three teachers, and most coaches reported that they stayed in touch after the visits through email. Coaches would travel to local schools and work with peers in a variety of roles. Coaching

was divided into four categories from which coaches could self-select an area of interest. Region-level administrators would serve as lead mentors to support groups of new coaches with scheduling, ongoing learning, and resources.

### **PROGRAM DESIGN**

At the start of the Coaching Academy, the leadership team hoped to attract 10 applicants. In fact, 40 teachers applied. Educators recognized the opportunity to experience an instructional leadership role while remaining in the classroom.

"I am a continuous learner and always looking for ways to grow professionally," said kindergarten teacher Connie Alcoser. "I thought I had exhausted all opportunities, but then the Coaching Academy presented a new avenue for professional growth."

Participants engaged in three consecutive days of learning, with the overall goal to build understanding about the why, what, and how of coaching. In his book *Drive* (Pink, 2009), Daniel Pink says that people are motivated by purpose, mastery, and autonomy. These teachers were motivated by their passion to help their peers succeed as well as their desire to gain an understanding of coaching skills and eagerness to work independently outside of their home school. One teacher said, "As a coach, my work not only improves my instruction for my students but gives me the opportunity to hopefully impact the learning of hundreds of other children as well. After all, that's why so many of us became teachers: to impact children."

The first day began with a community-building protocol, followed by a discussion of a preassigned lecture by Simon Sinek that delved into the realm of leaders who inspire others with providing the "why" for the vision (Sinek, 2010).

Program leaders spoke of their deep and heartfelt passion for coaching. Patty McGee, coordinator of professional development in literacy and a member of the instructional leadership team, told participants, "Coaching brings me to a new level of supporting student achievement, the passion that I entered this profession with."

Throughout the three days, teachers remained in communication remotely through an online bulletin board, called a wallwisher, available at [www.padlet.com](http://www.padlet.com). Participants' comments provided reflection and enhancements to the speakers, assigned articles, and the study of educational

NORTHERN VALLEY  
COACHING ACADEMY 2012  
**SAMPLE WALLWISHER  
COMMENTS**

**Linda M.:** Is anyone else thinking about Steve Barkley's suggestion of coaching "the best" teachers first?

**Bob Price:** Add your thoughts. I want to learn more about CBAM and how this is important to any school change initiative.

**M. Signore:** "The best" teachers first also stuck with me. What a great way to get teachers to view working with a coach as positive. I'll be using that strategy.

**A. B-Thumm:** Coaching the "best teachers" first certainly resonates. Not only does it promote "buy-in," it works to deepen the pool of professional "go-to" teachers.

**Abg:** The Skype with SB was great; biggest takeaway was starting with the "top 5" first ... think the recognition from the principal will be great way to open pathways.

**Anonymous:** Our table decided that we liked the idea of starting with the top five teachers. It was a surprising idea that really seems to make a lot of sense to us.

**Jr:** I was fascinated by the idea that we should coach the best teachers first. Perhaps we should begin with this group.

**Bob Price:** Take a look at this important article about coaching from a noneducator, surgeon Atul Gawande.

**Door table:** In the "Why Coaching" article, we were struck by the impact of feedback on the coaching process and how it affects the transfer of skills.

**oflynn@nvnet.org:** Opening our doors to other teachers and visiting other classrooms. Most skilled teachers being coached first; then work outward. Going from good to great.

**Anonymous:** I went home thinking about the learning dip, being uncomfortable and making others uncomfortable. Approaching the best teachers first may provide an in as well.

**Anonymous:** Keep focus on student learning. Fine line between administration and teachers. Will this group meet again during the year? We hope so!

**Chris Nagy:** Emerson once said: "Do not go where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." You are the trailblazers and coaching linchpins.

coaching. (See sample above.)

Teachers watched as Principal Christopher Kirkby led a skit dramatizing the importance of confidentiality. The skit portrayed a well-intentioned coach who unwittingly mentions something she had observed in a new teacher's classroom. The remarks made their way to some parents and to the teacher being unfairly portrayed as an ineffective educator. Understanding the critical importance of keeping confidences, Academy coaches made their pledge and signed a confidentiality agreement. (See sample confidentiality agreement on p. 33.)

Participants also heard from prominent education leaders. Via Skype, education coach and consultant Steve Barkley told the group to establish the value and benefits of coaching by beginning the process with high-performing educators. Learning Forward Senior Advisor Joellen Killion helped the group to establish deeper understanding of the coach's role in student achievement.

Kathleen O'Flynn, coordinator of professional development, said that Killion "really focused on the idea that student achievement is at the heart of all conversations." One participant said, "I think teachers often get in their own way, looking for systems and projects that do nothing to further student achievement. Joellen Killion's message of streamlining our focus to our ultimate goal — student achievement — was huge."

Learning Forward Senior Consultant Victoria Duff, formerly with New Jersey Department of Education, discussed the Teacher Leader Model Standards, which can be used to guide the preparation of experienced teachers to assume leadership roles.

Michael Cohan, New Jersey Education Association professional development and instructional issues director, addressed

the importance of coaching as a teacher leadership role and the association's adoption of Learning Forward's definition of professional development.

At the closing ceremony, graduates expressed a renewed spirit of possibilities. Jonathan Regan, a middle school social studies teacher, said, "I love the idea that we are at the forefront of coaching in education. I think it is a very powerful tool for school improvement and can lead us in many different directions in our careers."

#### SUSTAIN EMERGING LEADERS

The role of teacher leader differs from that of other school leaders. Teachers need to be accepted as leaders by their peers and provided with recognized responsibilities that are communicated to the entire school community (Killion, Harrison, Bryan, & Clifton, 2012).

The clarification of roles is best established through collaboration with administrators. Administrators and coaches need to have ongoing dialogue concerning their roles and responsibilities and outcomes. It must be clear that coaches maintain the confidences of the teachers with whom they work, and it must also be stated that the purpose of coaching is student achievement. To ensure success, coaches need to participate in formal learning as well as informal peer-to-peer meetings.

Professional development for administrators is also key to effective implementation. Through shared readings and discussions, presentations, workshops, and coaching, administrators learn to articulate a clearly communicated purpose for coaching, outline coach and teacher expectations, and hold educators ac-



countable for identified outcomes.

Educators in different roles have different responsibilities for coaching, and these are outlined in Innovation Configuration (IC) maps developed by Learning Forward (Learning Forward, 2012, 2013). IC maps identify and describe the major components of Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011) in operation.

The consortium's administrative teams used the IC maps for school-based coaches and teacher leaders in *Taking the Lead* (Killion & Harrison, 2006) to get an understanding of what the individual roles looked like in practice. At regional meetings, district administrators read and discussed the coaching implementation role expectations and reflected on their current state. The professional development supervisor provided ongoing individual coaching for administrators.

### HEIGHTENED INTEREST IN LEADERSHIP

In June 2013, coaches gathered to evaluate their experiences and identify areas of growth. Their stories revealed increased efficacy, mutual learning, cross-pollination of school practices, and a breakdown of hierarchical barriers.

Holly Procida, a 5th-grade teacher, said, "My coaching experience cemented the idea that working with teachers was as fulfilling as working with students. We have so much to learn and share with each other. Without worrying about how our roles fit together and just concentrating on pure instruction, so much honest reflection can take place."

One 2nd-grade teacher went to a high school teacher's classroom to facilitate a cooperative learning experience and left realizing that best practices can improve student and teacher engagement regardless of the grade level.

Teachers reported a heightened interest in tackling new leadership tasks in their districts and beyond, such as opening their class for a lab site and offering regional workshops.

Christopher Nagy, Northern Valley Regional High Schools superintendent, has incorporated instructional coaching as part of the new supervisory structure. In-district math and language arts teachers were hired and their schedules modified to provide part-time coaching support for their peers. In addition, newly hired math and language arts supervisors' responsibilities include working collaboratively with the coaches.

Nagy recognizes that coaching is a powerful school improvement intervention that allows educators to make desired changes in their knowledge, skills, and practices (Killion et al., 2012).

The Coaching Academy was a call to action. Coaches who participated in the academy are now confident and eager to become school-based coaches.

One teacher summarized it best: "At first, I felt trepidation about the practice of instructional coaching, as it was a change in our culture. Coaching has proven to be a powerful, sustained professional learning experience for everyone involved. The necessary ingredients are trust, training, and time. Mix them to-

### CONFIDENTIALITY PLEDGE

Northern Valley Schools Consortium, July 2012

*One of the most important foundational beliefs of the coaching relationship is trust. The Northern Valley Schools Consortium Coaching Academy adheres to this idea and builds all strategies, skills, and philosophies around this important tenet. In order to clearly state this conviction to the teachers that will be coached, the following statement has been created to support clarity and confidence.*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, as part of the Coaching Academy, support and promote the idea of building trust through confidentiality. The role of the coach is one of support, to help teachers continue to be successful and effective educators. The role of coach is not to be an evaluator, but to be a partner in learning and growth. As an educational coach, I will adhere to and support the philosophies related to confidentiality as outlined by the Coaching Academy.

gether, and the result is a collaborative environment that values reflection and teacher ownership of professional development."

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**Linda Mayer ([mayerlinda@gmail.com](mailto:mayerlinda@gmail.com)) is a professional development consultant and former professional development supervisor for Northern Valley Schools in Demarest, N.J. ■**



In 7th grade, students can explore equity by using dialogue poetry to examine the concept of power from different perspectives, such as manager and worker.

# VOICES *of* EQUITY

**BEGINNING  
TEACHERS ARE  
CRUCIAL PARTNERS  
AND EMERGING  
LEADERS OF EQUITY  
EDUCATION**

**By Nicole West-Burns, Karen Murray, and Jennifer Watt**

**I**n Ontario, Canada, equity education is a priority for every district school board. Boards, schools, administrators, and teachers must have support in meeting the challenges to move ahead in accordance with provincial equity policy and recommendations.

The Ontario Ministry of Education, recognizing this need in 2009, established an equity policy that states, “To improve outcomes for students at risk, all part-

ners must work to identify and remove barriers and must actively seek to create the conditions needed for student success” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 5).

Beginning teachers are crucial partners and emerging leaders of equity education. Some of the equity concerns these teachers face are issues tied to representation, achievement, discipline, graduation, and overall school experiences for students who are racialized and historically marginalized.

District school boards are working intentionally to

## TOPICS FOR DEMONSTRATION CLASSROOMS

Grade	Inquiry question rooted in theory	Demonstration classroom focus
Kindergarten	How can I teach students the importance of social justice issues by first focusing on big ideas such as fairness — ideas that students can relate to authentically?	Early learners interrogate inequalities in society while building a positive self-image. Students focus on a picture book on the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and apply their knowledge of fairness to their lives and to his life.
Grades 3-4	How might students' examination of newspaper articles on the topic of their community and personal interviews with members of the students' community (including parents) impact students' perceptions of the community where they live?	Students explore the idea that there is beauty and value in their community and answer this question: How do our community heroes add beauty and value to the community?
Grade 7	Can culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy make a difference in a predominantly privileged gifted class and a predominantly underprivileged special needs class?	Students use dialogue poetry to examine the concept of power from different perspectives (e.g. manager/worker, master/enslaved, bully/transgendered person).

improve outcomes and identify and remove barriers for racialized and historically marginalized students because the province has recognized that the responsibility lies with the institutions. However, as the district removes barriers for students, it must create conditions for beginning teachers to become leaders of this work.

Why focus on beginning teachers? As they prepare to work within Ontario schools systems, it is important that beginning teachers understand how issues of power and privilege play out in schools and how these issues affect students. Although this understanding is also important for veteran teachers, districts must begin by supporting this work with their newest teacher leaders.

Beginning teachers have an opportunity to become emerging equity leaders — to make meaning of policies and act as advocates for educational equity in practical ways in classrooms, schools, and boards. This requires a new vision for beginning teachers as transformative leaders who question the status quo, moving professional learning for novice teachers beyond typical models that focus solely on issues of survival, procedures, resources, and classroom management.

In one Ontario public school board, beginning teachers have participated since 2011 in professional learning focused on a culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy framework as well as other issues of equity.

Culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy is based on two theoretical bodies of work that focus on schooling experiences and achievement of racialized and historically marginalized students. This body of work can serve as an anchor for examining beginning teacher practice in Ontario within the current context.

With that in mind, the beginning teachers department

of the Toronto District School Board created a professional learning module on creating culturally responsive and relevant classrooms (see box on p. 37). Beginning teachers engaged in a five-part collaborative inquiry that linked theory to practice, culminating in a visit to a demonstration classroom. The classroom experience allowed beginning teachers to set specific learning goals and use the observations as a basis for how to embed culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy as a part of students' learning experiences.

In spring 2013, beginning teachers who participated in this professional learning module reflected on their equity concerns and how to move forward as emerging leaders in equity education. From their reflections, five key insights emerged.

### 1 Beginning teachers want to talk about race and class.

Beginning teachers want and need the space and time to acquire the ability to talk about the challenging issues that impact education, such as race and class. They find that these issues aren't often addressed in professional learning.

Several beginning teachers noted the deficit views that existed about students, their families, and their communities. The schools where the teachers work serve mostly racialized students in high-poverty areas. Although these teachers described themselves as thinking differently in many cases from veteran colleagues, they did not have a professional space to explore the issues that challenged them connected to race, ethnicity, poverty, and other social identity categories that were brought up in schools and often negatively discussed.

Although several teachers expressed confidence in their thinking about these issues, many said that they did not feel confident in their ability to stand their ground and be able to articulate their oppositional thinking. They said neither their formal educational training nor other professional learning gave them the tools they needed.

One teacher said, “Certain comments were being made (in school). ... I grew up in that neighborhood, and hearing how families were being referred to was really frustrating for me. I didn’t have the strength and knowledge prior to this module to facilitate these conversations. I got the strength to open up these conversations.”

The professional learning module gave teachers a safe environment to discuss uncomfortable issues around race and class. With a deeper understanding of the broader theoretical bodies of work, participants learned how to address issues of oppression that they had experienced. Through case studies, teachers practiced how they might respond in various situations and what policies they could use to support their arguments.

After working with colleagues on difficult conversations, the beginning teachers said they felt empowered to have these conversations within their own school sites.

## **2 Beginning teachers need to learn theory, see it in action, and then talk about it.**

Beginning teachers value a model of professional learning that incorporates theory, classroom visitations, and a debrief session, which then acts as a catalyst for them to take action in their own school sites.

What makes a new teacher try something in the classroom? After getting theoretical grounding for culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy, then seeing what that looks like in classrooms, many of these teachers said they felt confident to try to push themselves.

In a debrief session following the classroom visit, the beginning teachers discussed student voice and what they saw with the demonstration teacher. Many participants cited the experiential visit as key to their learning. However, just as many attributed their learning and desire to push themselves on the combined impact of theory, application, and discussion.

One teacher said, “I think it was important to have time to read the theory behind it and then visit the model classroom. ... Even to have that period of time afterwards to ask the teacher questions and think about what if we did this or that. ... If any of those pieces stood alone, it wouldn’t have the same effect.” (See table on p. 35 for examples of topics covered in demonstration classrooms.)

## **3 Beginning teachers want to know they are not alone.**

Beginning teachers need to know they are not alone in their thinking about how to create more equitable educational experiences and outcomes for students and in their desire to push the

difficult conversations tied to equity.

Several teachers said they felt that they were viewed as new professionals who had been indoctrinated by their education programs and filled with ideas that were met with skepticism and cynicism by veteran staff. One beginning teacher describes this as being told he was “pouring old wine into new bottles” and that his work was “nothing to get excited about.”

One teacher who was involved in an equity-focused school initiative said he felt that his thinking was valued in his school site. However, outside of that initiative, he said he felt that people tuned out of these conversations.

Teachers with administrators who supported culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy work and the challenging conversations about equity felt more at ease. One teacher noted, “The principal at my school is very interested. She was pushing it. And I think that was important that she knew this work needs to be done at our school.” Another said, “The principal felt the need to give a voice there (to these issues), and I was happy for that.”

Many of these teachers say that, with administrative support, they believe they could be leaders in educational equity who can share and show others that culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy is possible. They want to share what they have learned — and are eager to do so, formally and informally.

One teacher said, “A lot of teachers and parents come in saying, ‘Why are you telling our kids that it’s OK if they have two moms or two dads?’ We need to speak about it. And teachers don’t know about these policies ... haven’t read them or are unaware.”

## **4 Beginning teachers need mentors who can talk about these issues.**

Beginning teachers need mentors who know about and want to talk about the challenging issues tied to equity work in schools.

Teachers noted that the mentor relationship is strongest when they share similar pedagogy and thinking. Some pointed out the value of having mentors participate in the same professional learning in equity concerns as beginning teachers to ensure continuity and synchronicity of learning and practice.

Creating opportunities for combined professional learning for mentors and mentees allows for conversations and shared understandings of issues tied to equity.

Identifying mentors who already demonstrate equitable classroom practices provides additional support for the beginning teacher.

For example, many of the host teachers who opened their classrooms for observation also took on an informal mentoring role with the visiting teachers. These relationships created significant professional support for novice teachers wanting to continue the conversation and try new things based on this pedagogical focus.

## CREATING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE AND RELEVANT CLASSROOM SPACES

### Session 1

- Explore issues of equity in education and related policies in Ontario.
- Deepen collective understanding of culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy theory, highlighting the three tenets of high expectations, cultural competence, and critical consciousness.
- Investigate social identity and position.
- Discuss connections to culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy within the school.

### Session 2

- Explore examples of how other teachers have taken on the work of culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy.
- Deconstruct lessons for bias as a catalyst for exploring curriculum.
- Begin to explore the equity continuum and the possibilities for classroom inquiry.

### Session 3

- Identify questions for further inquiry and plot practices within selected tenets of the equity continuum.
- Work in grade-level teams to identify areas for curriculum development.

### Session 4

- Visit a demonstration classroom.
- Meet with the teacher to familiarize self with teacher and lesson.
- Engage in focused observation of practice.
- Participate in post-observation with teacher to analyze lesson, ask questions, solidify learning.

### Session 5

- Reflect and consolidate learning from classroom visits.
- Identify next steps for classroom practice.
- Build a support network of other like-minded colleagues.

## 5 Beginning teachers need leaders who care about this work.

Beginning teachers need to know this work matters to the leaders where they work — that they are accountable to it.

Teachers in the project expressed a strong need to be pro-

vided time and assurance that it is OK to be intentional about equity issues, even with all the other details and tasks that crowd a teacher's daily routine. As one teacher said, "You lose track sometimes because you are on the treadmill of work ... but these are students' lives, and it's our responsibility. You can never be reminded too much of that."

### MAKING AN IMPACT

Professional learning increases the chances that the equity-focused work is incorporated and monitored by giving beginning teachers multiple entry points to explore these issues in a systematic way (Murray & West-Burns, 2011). The teachers who participated in professional learning on culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy became leaders in their own right. Many of these new teachers became members of equity committees in their schools, began co-facilitating with professional learning teams, initiated conversations in their school sites about equity policy, and actively sought to redefine curriculum and share these experiences with their colleagues and school communities. The professional learning series served as a catalyst in some cases for teachers to seek more knowledge in areas related to the topics they had begun to explore.

While participating teachers were overwhelmingly positive about the professional learning, they also noted these critical factors for their success: time and space for tough conversations, a model of learning that includes theory and application, a sense that they are not alone, mentors equipped to guide them, and administrative support. With these components, emerging leaders in equity education have the potential for the greatest impact on student outcomes.

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Nicole West-Burns ([nicole.west.burns@utoronto.ca](mailto:nicole.west.burns@utoronto.ca)) is director of school services for the Centre for Urban Schooling at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Karen Murray ([karen.murray@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:karen.murray@tdsb.on.ca)) is program co-ordinator for beginning teachers and Jennifer Watt ([jennifer.watt@ontario.ca](mailto:jennifer.watt@ontario.ca)) is instruction leader for beginning teachers in the Toronto District School Board. ■

**Emerging leaders in equity education have the potential for the greatest impact on student outcomes.**

# TURN OBSTACLES INTO OPPORTUNITIES

TEAM LEADERS USE A SKILLFUL APPROACH TO MOVE PAST BARRIERS TO LEARNING

By Elisa B. MacDonald

*Three weeks into my first year as a teacher, I am standing in the hallway at dismissal when the director of instruction gently approaches me and says, "Elisa, the principal wondered if you could lead your team's meeting."*

*"Today?" I ask, slightly panicked that the meeting starts in 15 minutes, and I have never led a team of adults before, let alone five colleagues with more experience than me.*

*He musters up his best smile and says, "For the year." He adds, "Just put a couple things down on paper as the agenda and try to get people to stick to it. You'll be fine."*

**M**y entry point into team leadership is what I call an instant coffee approach: Start with a group. Just add leader. And, as you might imagine, this approach yielded as much richness as, well, instant coffee. I am so grateful to the first team of teachers that I led, but I would hardly call what I did leading learning for student achievement.

Since that fall day in 1995, I have had numerous op-

portunities to develop my capacity to lead teams and coach others to do so. These experiences have led me to appreciate the craftsmanship of leading a team of adults. The well-intentioned advice from my administrator to write an agenda and try to stick to it does not begin to prepare a team leader for the complexity of leading colleagues in learning. Regardless of who is leading or being led, every team seeking to improve student achievement comes up against hurdles. These hurdles generate distinct dilemmas for a team leader.

For instance, a team leader might succeed in getting



Author and teacher leader developer Elisa B. MacDonald says she has come to appreciate the craftsmanship of leading a team of adults.

Photo by KY WINBORN

teachers to regularly look at student work together, but can't get the conversation past blaming others and focused on examining root causes and solutions. This presents the team leader with a dilemma: How do I lead our team in rigorous discourse when blame and excuses dominate talk?

Or a team leader may find she is able to foster rigorous discourse, but her team gets stuck at implementation in the classroom, leaving her to wonder: How do I lead an action-oriented team when intentions don't align with classroom practice?

Team hurdles often crop up because of what is going on inside the team, but outside factors contribute as well. School leadership, for example, can help or hinder a team's learning and impact on students. For instance, a team leader may be designated to lead a team, but when the principal is still making all of the team's learning decisions, the team leader is faced with a dilemma: How do I foster shared leadership for learning when no one has authority to lead (including me)?

I have learned that no matter how much experience a team leader has, she is likely to be confronted with team

hurdles, creating a dilemma of what to do. What distinguishes the skillful team leader from a less-effective leader is her approach to overcome these hurdles. This approach is rooted in the leader's values, mindset, intelligence, and skill.

### THE SKILLFUL LEADER'S APPROACH

#### Values

Values provide guidance for the work teams do. They ground a team leader in what is important. They remind a team leader of what matters. When faced with hurdles to team learning, the skillful team leader relies on her strong commitment to five foundational values: collaboration, shared leadership, goal setting and attainment, rigorous discourse, and continuous improvement.

To anyone versed in professional learning community literature, this list should sound familiar — perhaps so familiar that the meaning is watered down. The skillful team leader has an elevated, nuanced

**I have learned that no matter how much experience a team leader has, she is likely to be confronted with team hurdles, creating a dilemma of what to do.**

understanding of these five foundational values, and she fully commits to putting them into practice. Here is what each value looks like.

**Collaboration.** The skillful team leader believes learning together yields better results than does working alone. She is not satisfied with a group that meets regularly and calls itself a team when the members neither learn from one another nor advance student learning. She continuously assesses and advances the team's function (how they work interdependently) and impact on student learning (what they are working on and the outcomes achieved).

**Shared leadership.** The skillful team leader does not simply share leadership within the team by rotating roles of facilitator, notetaker, timekeeper, and the like. Instead, he insists that team members share the lead for each other's learning, including his own.

**Goal setting and attainment.** The skillful team leader does not set and implement team goals out of compliance but works diligently with the team to attain goals that deeply matter to teachers, students, and the school. Driven by purpose, the team leader advances the team through the inquiry cycle to achieve measured gains for students.

**Rigorous discourse.** The skillful team leader does not settle for team discourse that promotes more of the same talk and practice, but gently and purposefully prods

the team to engage in evidence-based discourse that challenges cultural assumptions held by leaders, teachers, and students so that actionable knowledge is gained.

**Continuous improvement.** The skillful team leader is not satisfied with team learning that doesn't result in replicable, long-lasting change.

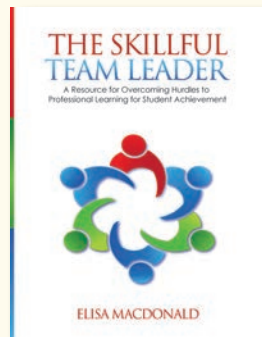
**I have developed a growth mindset, but I did not start with one. As I reflect on my early years, I see evidence of my fixed mindset. At times, I lowered my expectations about what some teachers could achieve, and, consequently, I didn't nudge and support them as I should have.**

## THE SKILLFUL TEAM LEADER

By *Elisa MacDonald*

This book is an essential resource for team leaders and trainers of team leaders. The author offers a skillful approach to team leadership rooted in values, mindset, intelligence, and skill. Reality-based examples illustrate common team hurdles in collaboration, shared leadership, goal setting and attainment, rigorous discourse, and continuous improvement.

Available in the Learning Forward Bookstore, [www.learningforward.org/bookstore](http://www.learningforward.org/bookstore) or 800-727-7288.



## Mindset

What a teacher believes in his core about every student's capacity to learn impacts his effectiveness in the classroom. What a team leader believes in her core about every teacher's capacity to learn and improve impacts her effectiveness in leading a team.

Carol Dweck's (2006) research highlights the distinctions between fixed and growth mindsets and the impact each has on an individual's effort and success. Applied to leadership, the skillful team leader approaches hurdles from a growth mindset with a belief that every student and every teacher can improve as can her own ability to lead them. Being able to recognize both a teacher's mindset and one's own is a necessary skill for any team leader to facilitate ongoing learning. Being able to influence mindset brings about desired change.

I have developed a growth mindset, but I did not start with one. As I reflect on my early years, I see evidence of my fixed mindset. At times, I lowered my expectations about what some teachers could achieve, and, consequently, I didn't nudge and support them as I should have.

Similarly, I didn't feel confident in respectfully challenging teachers who were considered outstanding. I believed they had nothing more to learn and would balk at anything our team or I suggested. In addition, I mistook some teachers' concerns about changing as an indication that they were just being resistant.

Even as a teacher, I possessed a fixed mindset about my own abilities, sometimes quick to challenge my team leader when asked to implement something I didn't think I could do.

With conscious effort, my mindset changed. As a teacher, I listened and learned from my colleagues, hearing their growth mindset about students — going all out to ensure that their students learned. I followed suit with my classes and ultimately realized that the adults I lead are learners, too, needing the right conditions for growth. I learned to view failure differently. Teachers who fail are not failures.

As a team leader, I worked with teachers who at first were reluctant to make changes to their practice and later became champions of the change. I noticed that when I responded differently to someone who had a fixed mindset about his own teaching, his mindset and actions began to shift.

Instead of dismissing someone who showed resistance, I believed in his abilities, came to understand his concerns, and followed through with action. When he began to achieve, he began to believe. I learned that my mindset about the capacity of others to learn influenced how much they learned.

## Intelligence

The intelligence with which the skillful team leader approaches her work is not IQ but EQ, emotional intelligence. A term coined by Daniel Goleman (2002), *emotional intelligence* is one's ability to be attuned to and respond to emotions in self and others.



Skillful team leaders access “a potent emotional guidance system that keeps what they say and do on track. ... They listen carefully, picking up on what people are truly concerned about, and they respond on the mark” (p. 50).

Jack London’s (1916) description of surfing in his short story, “The Kanaka Surf,” seems a perfect metaphor for the emotional intelligence the skillful team leader exhibits. He wrote that, “[It] requires wisdom of waves, timing of waves, and a trained deftness in entering such unstable depths of water with pretty, unapprehensive, head-first cleavage, while at the same time making the shallowest possible of dives” (para. 39).

Like the surfer, the skillful team leader possesses wisdom, timing, and deftness as she navigates the hurdle-filled waters of leading a team. She is highly attuned to the emotions of the group and is aware of how her own emotional response can impact others. She manages these emotions with skill.

When I began leading my colleagues, I found that being attuned to others’ emotions came naturally. Years of teaching and needing to be aware of every student in the room at all times helps develop this. But where I quickly realized I needed growth was in regulating my own emotions and responding to others. To read and respond effectively to the emotional climate that a hurdle creates, and to avoid inadvertently creating a new hurdle, requires skill.

### Skill

When face-to-face with a hurdle, the skillful team leader is able to:

**Identify the hurdle.** Like pausing a movie at a critical point, the skillful team leader can detect a hurdle when it is almost unnoticeable to anyone else on the team. He recognizes when a team encounters an obstacle to learning and consciously proceeds to uncover where it is coming from.

**Explore possible causes.** The skillful team leader does not react to a hurdle but instead thoughtfully analyzes it as if looking through a telephoto lens of a digital video camera. She is able to zoom in to causes found at the team level and then zoom out to see causes posed by her own leadership and the school.

**Respond.** After careful analysis of possible contributing factors to the hurdle, the skillful team leader thoughtfully considers her options for response. She not only decides which responses to use but also when to use them. She makes use of four types of responses:

- **Proactive response.** What the team leader says and does can often prevent the team from coming up against the hurdle in the first place. For example, a common proactive response used is norming, also known as crafting a group agreement. Successful teams not only norm for function (e.g. “We will agree to disagree”) but they also norm for impact on teacher and student learning (e.g. “We will invite others to question our assumptions, beliefs, and values”).

- **In-the-moment response.** The skillful team leader makes the decision to respond to what is happening as it is happening. For example, a team leader faced with the hurdle of getting others on his team to lead can find an entry point and invite leadership. He listens for moments when someone expresses interest to lead and creates an opportunity. If a teacher recommends a successful strategy to others, the team leader can press gently by asking, “Would you be willing to bring in the resource that gave you that strategy?”
- **Follow-up response.** The skillful team leader’s words and actions after a meeting ensure that the team is able to sustain gains made without creating another hurdle to learning. For instance, the leader may use a check-in strategy, where a team assesses how well they function and the impact they have on student learning.
- **School leadership team response.** The skillful team leader mobilizes others, particularly the principal and administrators, in helping her team move beyond a given hurdle. Tony Wagner et al. (2006) suggest districts form “leadership practice communities” where leaders commit to “helping one another solve problems of practice related to the school’s teaching and learning challenges together” (p. 17).
- **Consider school culture.** The skillful team leader views hurdles as obstacles to overcome but also as windows into the complex world of school culture. Often described as “the way we do things around here,” school culture is full of beliefs, values, customs, and traditions that suggest how people have interacted in the past and are the basis for how they interact in the present (and likely will in the future unless deep-rooted change is made). Schools that don’t address the deeper cultural issues at hand only go through the motions of being a professional learning community, and they will struggle to achieve sustainable student improvement (Fullan, 2008). The skillful team leader knows that addressing a problem specific to her team without a deep look at how school culture contributes will only give rise to the hurdle again. For a team leader, this means considering not only causes from within the team but also looking for signs of a gap in school culture. Based on Edgar H. Schein’s work, this culture gap is when an espoused value doesn’t align with visible evidence in the organization (as cited in Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, &

*Continued on p. 49*

**When I began leading my colleagues, I found that being attuned to others’ emotions came naturally. Years of teaching and needing to be aware of every student in the room at all times helps develop this. But where I quickly realized I needed growth was in regulating my own emotions and responding to others.**



# VIRTUAL SCHOOL, REAL EXPERIENCE

**SIMULATIONS REPLICATE THE WORLD OF PRACTICE FOR ASPIRING PRINCIPALS**

## By Dale Mann and Charol Shakeshaft

**A** web-enabled computer simulation program developed by researchers at Virginia Commonwealth University offers a virtual twist on professional learning for aspiring principals.

Project ALL (Authentic Learning for Leaders) drops prospective administrators into the work of leading a virtual middle school over an academic year and then tracks their performance through hundreds of authentic tasks.

Participants work through a year in the life of a school principal and see more than 400 video encounters, emails, memos, voice mails, text messages, and other story elements that replicate the work of leading a middle school.

With a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Charol Shakeshaft, professor of education leadership at Virginia Commonwealth University, and Dale Mann, managing director of Interactive Inc., began in 2008 to develop, test, and refine this new tool.

The simulation presents real-world opportunities, problems, and challenges that are not always covered in lectures, textbooks, or workshops. For example, using the simulation requires dealing — on-screen and in real time — with demanding parents, observing classrooms, completing personnel evaluations, coping with budget cuts, and enforcing curriculum decisions.

As the pattern of a participant's decisions emerges, those choices affect the trajectory of the school: Teacher morale goes up or down, student-related metrics change, the attitudes of the principal's central office supervisors become more or less favorable. As the decisions accumulate, algorithms calculate a profile of the participant's strengths and weaknesses.

### IMMERSIVE AND INTERACTIVE

Next-generation simulations are as different from conventional professional learning as board games are from video games. Project ALL's role-playing simulation uses

point-of-view camera work and full-motion video produced on location in an urban middle school. Next-generation simulations succeed where other learning media — especially print and lectures — do not because of three features:

- Simulations require first-person involvement that forces participation, and that learn-by-doing increases understanding and facilitates behavior change.
- Simulations can be made learner-specific and context-specific.
- Simulations couple consequences to decisions and make learning authentic and practical.

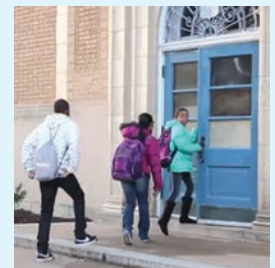
Project ALL's Charles Thompson Jones Middle School is a high-fidelity, full-motion video replication of a year in the life of a school that presents problems, requires decisions, and feeds back consequences in real time.

### CREATING THE SIMULATION

The simulation spans a year in the life of a person appointed interim acting principal at Charles Thompson Jones Middle School. The year begins in July, with the planning demands characteristic of the summer.

The sequence of events follows the school year: August includes master scheduling, hiring staff, and dealing with new parents. Budget issues first appear in November, and the spring is focused on high-stakes testing and school improvement planning with high-stakes testing demands. No problem is ever labeled, nor are they grouped by function as they might be in a conventional class. Rather, as in the real world, issues simply impose themselves on the participant.

For most problem/choice sequences, the moment an option is selected, the participant sees an immediate video consequence linked to that choice. As in reality, the conse-



### WATCH THE DEMO

For a demonstration of Project ALL's Charles Thompson Jones Middle School simulation, see [www.projectall.vcu.edu](http://www.projectall.vcu.edu).

quences of some decisions are delayed or cumulative or linked to other decisions. For example, a new teacher asks to talk with the virtual principal about her first-year problems. The principal can choose to meet or not, but if the principal declines or simply omits to schedule something, the disappointed teacher quits two (virtual) months later.

In the background, computer algorithms score and compile the participant's performance on all tasks and, at predetermined intervals, the participant gets feedback through the on-screen responses of characters in the simulation as well as a computer graphic profile of strengths and weaknesses across leadership proficiencies.

**Events are quick occurrences that pop up in the middle of the participant's work with the simulated school. The 74 events do not require choices, but they do provide context, third-party counsel (both good and bad), and distractions characteristic of school administration.**

Charles Thompson Jones Middle School was designed to replicate a school in need of reform: underperforming, underresourced, stressed, dysfunctional, and high needs. The school is populated with data derived and modified from a cooperating urban district and informed by research on urban school improvement.

To structure the virtual principal's tasks, project leaders established proficiencies in areas derived from Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards, Educational Leadership Constituent Council standards, and the Virginia Performance Standards for School Leaders. Focus groups of school practitioners and academics helped draft original scenarios that reflected their experiences.

What principals do counts — that is, their decisions influence teachers, students, and schools. Because some decisions are good and others are bad, the program attaches a numeric weight to choices. In order

to replicate the relationship between what the principal does and what happens to the school, each of the principal's decisions is assigned a score. These scores are value judgments about the functionality of any course of action in the virtual context of Charles Thompson Jones Middle School as a turnaround school.

Each of the more than 400 decision elements is scored, and each choice triggers a visual consequence. One outcome of this problem-to-choice-to-consequence sequence is immediate feedback on decisions. A second and more profound outcome is the changing trajectory of the school as a function of the decisions. And the third outcome is the cumulative creation and presentation of personal leadership profiles for each participant.

#### HOW CONTENT IS PRESENTED

Content is presented in one of three ways: vignettes, decision points, or events.

Vignettes are the most complicated and demanding. They begin with a filmed problem requiring a choice. The participant next sees video showing the consequences of his or her choice, and the simulation then branches (again and again) along a decision tree with the trajectory dictated by choices. The participant deals with 15 vignettes across the simulated school year.

Decision points follow the same problem-choice-consequence dynamic but are self-contained and deal with a single issue. There are 159 decision points in the simulation.

Events are quick occurrences that pop up in the middle of the participant's work with the simulated school. The 74 events do not require choices, but they do provide context, third-party counsel (both good and bad), and distractions characteristic of school administration.

As in real practice, some of the randomly occurring events accurately display school circumstances, others are rumors, and others are distortions or are simply untrue. Expecting the participant to discern the reality and utility of the events is part of the intentional pedagogy of the simulation. The participant is challenged to construct his or her own theory of action. For some, seeing the immediate and longer-term consequences encourages reflection.

Participants can access the simulation from different places and at different times. They can log off and return to running the school at the point that they were interrupted, but they cannot change earlier decisions, despite what they may learn from the cumulating consequences of vignettes.

And participants can choose to ignore some problems, although, if they do, the computer program loops that temporarily ignored problem into the virtual future, where it returns to confront the participant again.

The simulation can aggregate all reports by descriptive characteristics of participants, such as experience, gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Having all participants running the same school builds in the potential for authentic, valid, and reliable comparisons among users.

#### OUTCOMES

The first group to participate in Project ALL included nine teachers from Richmond (Va.) Public Schools who indicated an interest in being school administrators. The group completed the simulation as a companion to conventional graduate preparation curriculum. During 2011-12, every participant completed every simulation assignment, often at home and on weekends.

Participants spent an average of 4.5 hours running the school over the simulated academic year with the simulation in an average of 82 sessions. Their administrative skills increased from the first to second semester. The average correct score (that is, decisions that would promote the improvement of the school) earned in the first semester was 53% (range 44% to 64%) of correct responses vs. 63% (range 54% to 71%) in

the second semester (Shakeshaft, Becker, Mann, Reardon, & Robinson, 2013).

The Project ALL simulation presents a chronically low-performing school with a vivid array of dysfunctions. Still, not all the participants recognized those continuously displayed features of the school, and even fewer were willing to commit to the kind of actions necessary to turn the school around.

Members of the first group were all classroom teachers who thought they wanted to be administrators but had never actually run schools. As project leaders listened to participants talk about the simulation, a majority of the participants said they felt the simulation gave them real-world opportunities to make decisions and receive feedback.

One student said she felt “like a real administrator. ... It was unique to be afforded the opportunity to make decisions, just like a real principal. However, [she] didn’t have to worry about the consequences, so it was a safe environment ... to practice and apply what [she] learned.”

Another participant said the simulation was an eye-opener. “It made me realize that you always have to do what’s best for the students and instruction, and sometimes you do not think about all of the factors when you make a decision.”

To test the authenticity of the tasks presented in the simulation, program leaders recruited 22 principals who were identified by peers and supervisors as exceptionally effective. These practitioners spent a day with the simulation, rating the situations on realism, importance, and comprehensiveness. The principals also analyzed the distribution of the content, the scoring, and the point distributions.

There was a moderate correlation among the principals on the decisions they scored as most preferable. Of the 63 sequences examined, 53 (84%) had higher than 52% agreement on the best course of action. The mean agreement among the exemplary practitioner group across all items was 67%.

These principals thought the simulation was demanding and thought-provoking. They liked the realism and agreed that the content was not otherwise available in conventional training or internships. As one principal said, “This is much more effective than the inbox exercises I did when I was getting my administrative endorsement.”

#### COST AND EFFICIENCY BENEFITS

The goal of Project ALL’s simulation is to deliver professional learning with more authentic replication of the requirements of school leadership, more message fidelity (less decay across repetitions, less variation among trainers), lower cost, and less time than conventional professional learning while also maximizing the anywhere, anytime, any learner equitable benefits of web-accessed material.

The initial cost to develop professional learning delivered by face-to-face instruction is lower, but the cost multiplies with every replication. Professional learning that uses digital plat-

forms is initially more expensive to create, but replications are virtually cost-free.

By using simulations, schools and districts do not have to pay for the cost of substitutes, travel, or lodging. Instead of paying consultants for each presentation, the simulation can be reused and revised at a fraction of the cost of conventional professional learning.

#### THE FUTURE

Simulations that replicate the world of practice and that connect consequences to behavior are a next step in professional learning. They are particularly helpful if:

- Audiences are dispersed, such as in rural and remote settings;
- The same message must be repeated to different audiences over time;
- The message content is lost as one trainer trains another and another, and that happens over time and across audiences;
- The audiences are skeptical or resistant to messages that they believe aren’t relevant or realistic; and
- The costs of conventional delivery are high (i.e. consultant fees, released time, time away from work).

The simulation has been piloted in three universities in addition to Virginia Commonwealth University as well as with two school districts for use in their leadership development programs, and is expected to be available to others by June 2014.

One participant, summarizing his experience, said the simulation helped make him aware of the types of issues that can arise in running a middle school and how to stay focused and on track. “I definitely felt like a real administrator because the decisions that I was making were relevant decisions,” he said. “I’ve seen some of those issues that we covered in the simulations and ... I can see the issues were relevant issues.”

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• Dale Mann (dmann@interactiveinc.org) is managing director of Interactive Inc., professor emeritus at Columbia University, and an adjunct professor at Virginia Commonwealth University. Charol Shakeshaft (cshakeshaft@vcu.edu) is a professor in the Virginia Commonwealth University Department of Educational Leadership. ■

**Participants can choose to ignore some problems, although, if they do, the computer program loops that temporarily ignored problem into the virtual future, where it returns to confront the participant again.**

# THINK

## EARLY PLANNING, TEACHER SUPPORT BOOST SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAMS

By Daniel Browne

There's a chill in the air. Teachers are hanging snowflakes in their classrooms. It's time to start thinking about your summer learning program, according to a recent RAND Corporation report, *Getting to Work on Summer Learning: Recommended Practices for Success* (Augustine, McCombs, Schwartz, & Zakaras, 2013).

The publication is the second report in what is expected to be a series culling lessons from a project in six school districts to determine whether district summer programs can boost student achievement. The report — which, like the project, was funded by The Wallace Foundation — offers guidance on how to start a districtwide summer program from scratch or improve an existing program as well as lessons on professional learning unique to summer.

That guidance should come in handy for harried districts officials, for whom launching and sustaining a summer program — and tailoring professional learning to the summer, in particular — is no easy task. “They find it difficult for a number of reasons,” says report co-author Catherine Augustine, not least because of the competing demands on their time, especially during the hectic end of the school year.

The report includes tips to help districts get past obstacles and move toward successful teacher hiring and professional learning. First and foremost, the authors emphasize the need to start planning early. That means committing to a summer program by December and beginning the

process by January. It also means sharp thinking about what professional learning and support the district will need to offer teachers and others who will staff the programs in June or July.

### WHY SUMMER LEARNING?

A fundamental problem that continues to plague educators is the achievement gap between low-income and higher-income students.

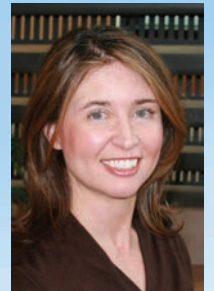
In the ongoing search for solutions, one of the more promising approaches is expanding opportunities for learning, particularly in the summer.

It's typical for students of all incomes to either learn at a slower pace in the summer or actually lose knowledge and skills. But the effect on low-income students is much greater — and evidence suggests it's cumulative.

The idea is relatively simple: Increase access to summer learning for low-income students, put the brakes on summer learning loss, and, in turn, shrink the achievement gap. The question is how to make that happen.

The report's recommendations come from an examination of summer programs offered by six districts: Boston, Mass.; Cincinnati, Ohio; Dallas, Texas; Duval County (Jacksonville), Fla.; Pittsburgh, Pa.; and Rochester, N.Y. The researchers visited the districts in 2011, the first summer of the Wallace-funded demonstration project, which is expected to last five years.

Based on what they saw, the researchers advise dis-



Catherine Augustine

# SUMMMER

tricts to not only offer instruction aligned with state and local standards, provided by certified teachers, just as they would during the regular school year, but also to set lower student-to-teacher ratios than they can in fall and spring. Academic instruction should last at least three hours a day, five days a week, for five to six weeks and be balanced with enrichment activities such as music, art, sports, and community service. For students to reap the benefits, they must attend regularly.

Programs that meet these criteria demand time, attention, and resources. Summer is like a second school year — only with less time to get the details right. One benefit of committing early is that districts can start hiring staff and involving them in planning from the outset. The report notes that in districts that got a late start, some teachers hired at the last minute missed out on professional learning.

## BE SELECTIVE

Summer programs have a limited amount of time in which to make a difference. To have the greatest impact, districts need to hire the best teachers they can find.

Districts in Wallace's demonstration project that are most successful in recruiting talented teachers use a rigorous selection process to ensure that candidates are highly motivated. Strategies include asking teachers to write an essay explaining why they want to work in the summer program, soliciting recommendations from principals, and conducting classroom observations before making an offer. One district even factors school-year performance metrics — the amount of improvement on state tests that a candidate's students achieve — into its determinations.

This district's decision to consider school-year performance in its hiring process paid dividends once the sum-

mer program was underway. The RAND report noted that teachers in the program used instructional time effectively, and students attended at a relatively high rate and made substantial gains on pre- and post-assessments.

The report also noted that most districts hired teachers specifically to teach math or reading rather than hiring first and then assigning a subject area later. This allowed districts to engage teachers in professional learning only in the parts of the curriculum that were relevant to them, making the process more efficient.

## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Once they are selected, teachers need professional learning in how best to work in the summer classroom. Some district officials may wonder why highly qualified teachers might need professional learning or how teaching in a summer program differs from what teachers already know.

There are marked differences, the report explains. During the school year, teachers may take as long as five weeks to get to know their students. In the summer, though, five weeks is the length of a program, or close to it, so teachers are expected to hit the ground running.

Most of the Wallace districts expect summer teachers to regularly break classes into smaller groups or differentiate lessons for lower- and higher-achieving students, which can be difficult with a roster of unfamiliar faces. The report says that teachers who were not adequately supported struggled to execute these strategies successfully. In some



This article is sponsored by The Wallace Foundation.

cases, they simply didn't do as much small-group instruction as specified.

To ensure teachers are thoroughly prepared to assume the task, the RAND report recommends districts take the following steps.

- **Familiarize teachers with the curriculum and how to teach it.**

The most important goal of professional learning is to make sure teachers understand the summer curriculum and how to teach it.

In the Wallace district where the highest proportion of teachers reported feeling well-prepared, they received three hours of instruction on the math curriculum and three hours on English language arts.

When it comes to picking up an unfamiliar curriculum, teachers say that reading the packet at home is not enough. They need to practice it, preferably with guidance from a coach. As one teacher said, "If you just give [the curriculum] to us and expect [us] to teach it, it's going to get taught in many different ways. ... If they show it to us, then we can get a better sense of what/how they want us to teach."

This kind of guided walk-through is easily crowded out by discussions of logistics, such as classroom assignments and rosters, if districts don't make time for it. Augustine, the RAND report co-author, points out that districts with the most effective professional learning start working with summer teachers in the spring and spread the learning over several months.

In order to take this approach, however, districts also need to have their summer curriculum in place by spring. That's one reason the RAND report recommends that districts anchor their programs in a commercially available and tested curriculum.

"We don't think published curricula are by their nature necessarily better than a curriculum that a district would produce," Augustine says. "We just have observed over and over again that districts are too busy to do this well. So we do recommend that they purchase a published curriculum but then augment it with additional activities that are aligned to the needs of the students."

- **Help teachers tailor the curriculum to individual students.**

Splitting students into groups based on their abilities — and then adjusting instruction for each group — is a challenge for many teachers during the regular school year. It can be even tougher in the summer, when they have less time to get to know their students and the curriculum may be less familiar.

Showing teachers how to differentiate instruction, and giving them time to practice it, should be a built-in part of professional learning, not an if-we-have-time extra. And when teachers need additional guidance during the summer session, a qualified instructional leader should be available to provide it.

- **Provide in-class support to teachers.**

Curriculum coaches can help teachers with a range of matters, but some approaches work better than others. One coach serving 10 schools, for instance, is not a recipe for success. By contrast, in the Wallace district with the best support system, coaches were a presence in the classroom, helping teachers put small-group instruction into practice and leading common planning meetings.

And just as students may benefit from spending the summer with a teacher who already knows them, coaches in this district are so effective in part because they have existing relationships with summer school principals and many teachers in the schools in which they work.

- **Don't leave out the other staff members.**

Curriculum coaches aren't the only personnel who can help teachers realize the summer program ideal of small groups and differentiated lessons.

Some Wallace districts place a support staff member, typically a paraprofessional or college student, in the classroom. In RAND's observations, these second adults were more likely to help distribute materials, escort students to the office, or administer assessments than to lead small-group instruction or work one-on-one with a struggling student.

Districts can encourage support staff members to get involved in teaching, the RAND report suggests, by including them in professional learning so they feel prepared to contribute.

Don't forget the principals, either, Augustine says. Just like during the school year, summer principals are expected to be instructional leaders as well as program managers, and if they aren't familiar with what the teachers are supposed to be teaching, they won't be in a position to evaluate classroom quality or offer help.

For example, Augustine says, "The teacher might say, 'Can you make sure I have everything I need for Day Three of Unit Two? It looks like some materials are missing,' and the principal will have to go investigate, 'Well, what is Unit Two? What's happening on Day Three?' So it's an instructional quality problem as well as an efficiency problem."

- **Give teachers time to get organized.**

There is one other element in addition to high-quality professional learning and support that a district can provide to put its summer teachers in the best position to succeed: time. That includes time to review materials, prepare flashcards and posters, locate all the technology they need, and test computer passwords.

### GET THE REPORT

*Getting to Work on Summer Learning: Recommended Practices for Success* is available free for download at <http://bit.ly/19fpbDF>.



The RAND report stresses that when districts build time into the schedule (and extra pay into the budget) for teachers to set up their classrooms before the program begins, they are able to make better use of instructional time from the outset. And teachers themselves say they want to make sure they have all the resources they need ready to go when their students walk through the door.

Augustine and her colleagues saw the difference the extra time could make: “When we walk into a classroom where teachers have had a day or two to set it up, there is all sorts of big butcher block paper taped around the room that has reminders for students on math procedures or reading tips,” she says. “When teachers don’t have that time, the classroom certainly doesn’t look as visually appealing, but it also doesn’t have those visual cues for learning. ... Teachers tell us they want those visual cues.”

*Continued from p. 41*

Smith, 1994, pp. 268-269). The school may have a healthy culture otherwise, but a gap creates a hurdle that teams have trouble moving past.

For example, a team struggling to collaborate might be due to the fact that the group is still forming and not comfortable sharing instructional challenges and successes. The skillful team leader also considers the possibility of a “culture of alone together,” where people are teamed together but act alone. They are guarded in what they share and with whom, seeing collaboration as only necessary for people who need help and preferring to work in isolation.

Teams that are content to be pockets of success in a system where school culture gaps go unaddressed find themselves struggling to sustain the positive impact they have. It’s as if the team is working hard to knit a beautiful sweater while someone is on the other end unraveling the yarn. The skillful team leader not only works with her team to navigate around the hurdles that school culture gaps cause, but also works to close those gaps so all teams can succeed.

#### STILL EMERGING

Years of listening to team leaders’ dilemmas and reflecting on my own, of mulling over moments when my response succeeded in overcoming a hurdle to team learning or unintentionally created another, and of searching for practical solutions grounded in theory and research have led me to believe that although hurdles can seem impossible to move past, they can, in fact, be catalysts for greater learning when approached skillfully.

With each hurdle I encounter, I better understand the complexity of leading. I learn how to anticipate and avoid; I learn

#### READY, SET, SUMMER

By making the decision to start early, recruit the best teachers available, and give them the professional learning, support, and time they need to do their job well, districts can set the stage for a fruitful summer. And keeping students on task between school years can begin to bridge the achievement gap.

Look out your window. Is that snow on the ground? Time to get to work on summer learning.

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Daniel Browne is a writer at The Wallace Foundation. ■

Turn obstacles into opportunities

how to effectively respond. And although I suppose my years of experience might categorize me beyond an emerging leader, I know I still have a lot to learn.

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Elisa B. MacDonald ([elisamacdonald@gmail.com](mailto:elisamacdonald@gmail.com)) is national director of teacher leader development at Teach Plus, T3 initiative and the author of *The Skillful Team Leader: A Resource for Overcoming Hurdles to Professional Learning for Student Achievement* (Corwin Press & Learning Forward, 2013), from which this article is adapted. ■



Learning Forward's Annual Conference is Dec. 7-11 in Dallas, Texas. Conference attendees can use the information and tool on these two pages to get the most out of their experience.

### TIPS FOR CONFERENCE GOERS

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. First-time conference goers will want to check in at the hospitality table near conference registration for a brief orientation, to get questions answered, and to receive their "red-dot" first-timer designation.  | 6. Keep your session tickets in a safe place. Tickets are required for all concurrent and preconference sessions.   |
| 2. Download the conference mobile app to your smartphone for easy access to conference information.   | 7. Choose a different table in the general sessions each day to meet and eat with new people.   |
| 3. Use the room list and hotel map to locate the rooms for all sessions. Add your sessions to your schedule in the mobile app. Download it from the App Store or Android Market or go to <a href="http://app.core-apps.com/learnfwd2013">http://app.core-apps.com/learnfwd2013</a> .  | 8. Schedule time to visit the Exhibit Hall and meet with vendors, attend a session in the iPD Showcase in the Learning Hangout, and enjoy a cup of coffee.  |
| 4. Review the onsite guide in the conference program, watch the e-news shown on screens during general sessions, check for updates on the mobile app, and follow the conference on Twitter (#learnfwd13) to access all the latest information. Stop by the Exhibit Hall Learning Hangout to check out conference Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram feeds on the social media wall. | 9. Meet people from your state or province when you attend the affiliate reception Monday night. Locations are listed on the room list. All are welcome.  |
| 5. Keep your name badge with you at all times. Your name badge serves as your admission to meals and general sessions, receptions, and the Exhibit Hall. A ticket is required for the preconference lunch and sessions.   | 10. Visit the Learning Forward booth in the Exhibit Hall. Learn more about programs such as Academy and Learning School Alliance and resources offered through the Center for Results to support your learning needs. |

**SESSION HANDOUTS:** Handouts are available for select sessions. Visit the attendee-only website to download the handouts for sessions that interest you: [www.learningforwardconference.org/annual13/handouts.cfm](http://www.learningforwardconference.org/annual13/handouts.cfm).

## CONFERENCE ATTENDEE LEARNING PLAN

The Learning Forward Annual Conference is a crucial resource in your work. Complete this form to help guide your time at the conference. Take time to fill out this action plan and record at least one strategy you will implement and at least one outcome you will document. Discuss these plans in the conference general sessions with fellow attendees. At the end of the conference, you'll have a chance to report out about your plans and commitments to action.

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ SCHOOL/DISTRICT OR BOARD: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTENDEE TYPE:

- External                       Technical assistance provider                       Organization                       Principal  
 Assistant principal                       Teacher                       Teacher leader                       Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Specific action:** I will implement this learning outcome:

**Date:** I will have completed implementation by (must be within six months of Annual Conference):

**Expected benefits:** Which campus/district or board/organization goal will your learning outcome support?

**Barriers:** What do you anticipate will get in the way of implementing this outcome (e.g. budget or time constraints, etc.):

**Enablers:** What will help you implement this outcome (e.g. leadership support, etc.)?

### Learning Exchange Online Community

Extend your conference learning on the Learning Exchange. All conference participants have access to the 2013 Annual Conference online learning community, where you can engage in follow-up discussion, get additional resources from conference sessions, and continue your collaboration with fellow attendees. Selected presenters will also provide extended learning opportunities on the Learning Exchange following their sessions. Get more information at <http://community.learningforward.org>.

### The Learning Forward Experience

First-time conference goers can attend the Learning Forward Experience session at **6 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 8** to get the insider's scoop on making the most of the conference, start networking early with fellow attendees, hear tips and secrets for using the conference app, and meet some of the people who make this "The Learning Conference."

# DEVELOP A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLAN

A professional learning plan establishes short- and long-term plans for professional learning and implementation of the learning. Such plans guide individuals, schools, districts, and states in coordinating learning experiences designed to achieve outcomes for educators and students.

Professional learning plans focus on the program of educator learning. A program of professional learning is “a set of purposeful, planned actions and the support system necessary to achieve the identified goals. Effective [professional learning] programs are ongoing, coherent, and linked to student achievement” (Killion, 2008, p. 11). Events, on the other hand, are occasional, episodic, disconnected incidents that are scheduled periodically throughout a school year. Typically, they have little or no connection with one another and little chance of producing substantial change (Killion, 2008).

Events are simply not enough to do more than raise awareness, transmit information, and possibly ignite a desire to change. For example, a workshop on using literacy across the curriculum is not a program of professional learning, whether the duration is two hours or 20. A program is not about the number of hours of formal learning, but about the nature of the learning itself. It may be informal or formal, but it must include application, analysis, reflection, coaching, refinement, and evaluation of effectiveness to produce results for educators and students. Furthermore, it needs to address state, school system, school, team, and individual learning goals.

## REFERENCE

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

Individuals leading or facilitating professional learning planning teams or members of planning teams may use the tool Websites to Sample Professional Learning Plans on pp. 56-59 to locate examples of templates and formats for professional learning plans. These examples represent how professional learning plans are structured, not necessarily exemplary plans.

### NEW WORKBOOK OFFERS STEP-BY-STEP PLANNING GUIDANCE

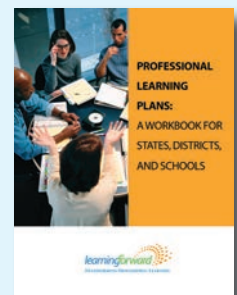
Professional learning plans establish short- and long-term guidance for professional

learning and its implementation. *Professional Learning Plans: A Workbook for States, Districts, and Schools* offers information and tools to walk educators through seven planning

steps, from data analysis to setting goals to identifying learning designs to monitoring impact. Effective plans help individuals, schools, districts, and states to coordinate learning experiences designed

to achieve outcomes for educators and students.

The workbook is available free for download at [www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core](http://www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core).



## STEPS TO DEVELOPING A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLAN

**Follow these steps to develop a short- or long-term professional learning plan.**

	Step	Task
1	Analyze student learning needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather multiple forms of student data.</li> </ul>
2	Identify characteristics of community, district, school, department, and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze the data to identify trends, patterns, and areas of needed improvement.</li> <li>• Gather data about the learning context.</li> <li>• Identify the features of the context that influence student and educator learning.</li> <li>• Identify potential contributors to the current state of student learning.</li> <li>• Write SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, results-based, and time-bound) goals for student learning.</li> <li>• Gather data about educators.</li> </ul>
3	Develop improvement goals and specific student outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review research and evidence on successful professional learning programs or practices.</li> <li>• Identify those relevant to the current goals and objectives.</li> </ul>
4	Identify educator learning needs and develop goals and objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop educator SMART objectives.</li> <li>• Define knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations, and behavior changes (KASAB).</li> <li>• Develop logic model.</li> </ul>
5	Study research for specific professional learning programs, strategies, or interventions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study professional learning research related to goal area and context features.</li> <li>• Identify research- or evidence-based practices.</li> </ul>
6	Plan professional learning implementation and evaluation, including establishing a logic model for specific professional learning programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop theory of change with assumptions.</li> <li>• Develop logic model.</li> </ul>
7	Implement, evaluate, and sustain the professional learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enact the plan.</li> <li>• Monitor progress and adjust as needed.</li> <li>• Evaluate progress and results.</li> <li>• Sustain support to achieve deep implementation over time.</li> </ul>

CORE ELEMENTS OF A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLAN	
<b>Most professional learning plans, whether short-term, annual, or multiyear, contain the following elements:</b>	
<p><b>Needs analysis.</b> Needs emerge from data, not wishes. Through a process of analyzing data about students, educators, and the system, studying trends and patterns, and assessing the potential causes of contributors, needs emerge. These needs are then studied to understand what might be causing or contributing to them.</p>	<p><b>Responsible person(s).</b> The responsible person(s) is the designated point person, or the persons who know about the actions and the status of each action. In most cases, the responsible person(s) works with a team or multiple individuals to complete an action.</p>
<p><b>Goal(s).</b> Goals specify the broad outcomes of professional learning. Typically, they are stated as outcomes for students, e.g. student achievement increases because educators learn. Many plans use the SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, results-based, and time-bound) goal format to convey the goal(s).</p>	<p><b>Indicators of success.</b> Indicators of success describe how planners will know whether the actions have occurred and the goals and objectives have been achieved. The indicators are descriptions of the completed actions or markers that demonstrate progress toward the goals.</p>
<p><b>Objectives.</b> Objectives delineate the specific long- and short-term changes that need to occur in order to meet the goal(s). In professional learning, they are frequently stated as the knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations, and behavior (KASAB) changes that occur in educators to achieve the goal(s) stated for students.</p>	<p><b>Measures of success.</b> Measures of success identify how data or evidence will be collected to demonstrate indicators of success. For example, if improved student writing is an indicator of success, the measures of success are the quarterly writing samples scored by teachers.</p>
<p><b>Strategic actions/interventions.</b> The strategic actions or interventions delineate what a state, district, school, team, or individual does, provides, or offers to accomplish the changes necessary to achieve the goals.</p>	<p><b>Evaluation plan.</b> The evaluation plan measures the success of the professional learning. It uses the indicators of success and measures of success to guide data collection to determine if the goals and objectives were achieved, if the strategic actions and interventions were appropriate, and what improvements can be made in future professional learning plans.</p>
<p><b>Timeline.</b> The timeline explains when actions will be completed and the objectives and goals achieved. It helps monitor progress over the duration of a plan.</p>	<p><b>Resources needed.</b> Resources include the staff, technology, funding, materials, and time necessary to accomplish the objectives and goals. Resources may also be called the inputs.</p>
<b>The following components are sometimes included in professional learning plans:</b>	
<p><b>Assumptions.</b> Assumptions are statements of belief, rather than facts, that undergird or drive the plan design. The assumptions frame the plan’s development and explain its design.</p>	
<p><b>Theory of change.</b> A theory of change maps the sequential actions needed to achieve identified goals. This theory is often graphically displayed to demonstrate the interrelationship of the components. It identifies the core components of professional learning that will produce the intended changes.</p>	
<p><b>Logic model.</b> A logic model is a diagram showing how a program works. Because it delineates the inputs, short-term outputs, and intermediate and long-term outcomes, the logic model is used as a progress-monitoring, assessment, evaluation, and communication tool.</p>	

## Improve your practice.

The Learning Forward Academy is a 2½-year extended learning experience that models Learning Forward’s vision for professional learning and teamwork in schools and districts. Academy members work collaboratively to solve significant “problems of practice” that occur within their school, district, division, state, province, or organization.

**“The Academy was the best experience of my 30 years in public education.”**

Tony Willis, English teacher,  
Carmel High School, Carmel, Ind.

**“... I would recommend [the Academy] to any educator striving to improve as a leader and as a contributor to increased student achievement.”**

Nancy Caudell-Trammell, assistant principal,  
Gwinnett County Public Schools, Georgia



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

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**ACADEMY**

To learn more, visit

[www.learningforward.org/learning-opportunities/academy](http://www.learningforward.org/learning-opportunities/academy).

WEBSITES TO SAMPLE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLANS	
<b>Use this list to investigate core elements, organization, and layout of professional learning plans.</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	Gain familiarity with a wide variety of professional learning plans.
<b>Time</b>	60 minutes.
<p>A comprehensive professional learning system team might want to divide up the websites or identify others to review to learn about how various states, school systems, schools, and individuals construct professional learning plans. The table includes a wide range of resources on professional learning plans. The sites provided are examples of plans for the purpose of studying their components and design and not necessarily offered as exemplars.</p>	
<b>Option 1</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Working in pairs, assign each pair two sites to review and ask them to collect common data from the site. Possible data to collect include:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Components of the plan</li> <li>b. Length of the plan</li> <li>c. Degree of specificity of the plan</li> <li>d. Requirements for developing the plan</li> <li>e. Other areas</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Ask members to come back to the whole group to report what they learned.</li> <li>3. Record ideas that members want to keep in mind as they develop their own professional learning plans.</li> </ol>
<b>Option 2</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assign two to three plans to small groups within the team and ask them to do a comparison across the plans. Ask them to be prepared to answer the following questions:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How are the plans alike?</li> <li>b. How are they different?</li> <li>c. What aspects of each plan make it a viable plan?</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Ask members to present their comparison to the whole group.</li> <li>3. Invite team members to summarize what they learned from their own and their colleagues' analyses.</li> </ol>



## SAMPLE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLANS AND TEMPLATES

## STATE FRAMEWORKS

Location	Title	Web link	Notes
Florida	Professional Development System Evaluation Protocol	<a href="http://www.fldoe.org/profdev/pdf/pdsprotocol.pdf">www.fldoe.org/profdev/pdf/pdsprotocol.pdf</a>	
New Hampshire	Statewide Professional Development Master Plan	<a href="http://www.education.nh.gov/certification/statewide_prof.htm">www.education.nh.gov/certification/statewide_prof.htm</a>	
Iowa	Iowa Professional Development Model	<a href="http://educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com_content&amp;task=view&amp;id=232&amp;Itemid=1286">http://educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com_content&amp;task=view&amp;id=232&amp;Itemid=1286</a>	
Vermont	A Guide for Increasing the Effectiveness of Professional Development in Schools and Districts	<a href="http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-Guide_for_Increasing_the_Effectiveness_of_Professional_Development.pdf">http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-Guide_for_Increasing_the_Effectiveness_of_Professional_Development.pdf</a>	
Oregon	Title II-A Professional Development	<a href="http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=2223">www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=2223</a>	
Missouri	Missouri Professional Learning Guidelines for Student Success	<a href="http://dese.mo.gov/divteachqual/leadership/pd_guidelines">http://dese.mo.gov/divteachqual/leadership/pd_guidelines</a>	
New Jersey	A Guidance Document for the School Professional Development Plan	<a href="http://www.nj.gov/education/profdev/pd/teacher/pdguidance_school.pdf">www.nj.gov/education/profdev/pd/teacher/pdguidance_school.pdf</a>	
New Jersey	A Guidance Document for the District Professional Development Plan	<a href="http://www.state.nj.us/education/profdev/pd/teacher/pdguidance_district.pdf">www.state.nj.us/education/profdev/pd/teacher/pdguidance_district.pdf</a>	

SAMPLE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLANS AND TEMPLATES			
SCHOOL SYSTEM FRAMEWORKS			
Location	Title	Web link	Notes
Duval County Public Schools, Jacksonville, Fla.	School Professional Development Plan Template and Sample	<a href="http://www.duvalschools.org/static/aboutdcps/departments/acadprog/riverdeep/SchoolPDP_template_and_Sample.pdf">www.duvalschools.org/static/aboutdcps/departments/acadprog/riverdeep/SchoolPDP_template_and_Sample.pdf</a>	
Chatham Central School District, Chatham, N.Y.	Chatham Central Schools Professional Development Plan 2011-2012	<a href="http://www.chathamcentralschools.com/district/nys_district_plans/professional_development_plan.pdf">www.chathamcentralschools.com/district/nys_district_plans/professional_development_plan.pdf</a>	
Dickinson Public Schools, Dickinson, N.D.	Professional Development Plan 2010-2011	<a href="http://www.dickinson.k12.nd.us/curriculum_resources/professional_development_plan_2010_2011.pdf">www.dickinson.k12.nd.us/curriculum_resources/professional_development_plan_2010_2011.pdf</a>	
Guilderland Central School District, Guilderland, N.Y.	Guilderland Central School District Professional Development Plan 2013-2014	<a href="http://www.guilderlandschools.org/district/pubs/districtplans/PDP.pdf">www.guilderlandschools.org/district/pubs/districtplans/PDP.pdf</a>	
Seattle Public Schools, Seattle, Wash.	Seattle Public Schools Teacher Professional Development Plan 2010-2011	<a href="http://professional-development.district.seattleschools.org/modules/locker/files/get_group_file.phtml?fid=9994402&amp;gid=2213995&amp;sessionid=e905d4863f70ac70498b22a0b20027c1">http://professional-development.district.seattleschools.org/modules/locker/files/get_group_file.phtml?fid=9994402&amp;gid=2213995&amp;sessionid=e905d4863f70ac70498b22a0b20027c1</a>	
Minneapolis Public Schools, Minneapolis, Minn.	Five-Year Comprehensive Professional Development Plan 2011-2016	<a href="http://staffdev.mpls.k12.mn.us/uploads/mps_pd_plan_final.pdf">http://staffdev.mpls.k12.mn.us/uploads/mps_pd_plan_final.pdf</a>	
Tulsa Public Schools, Tulsa, Okla.	Master Plan for Professional Development October 2011	<a href="http://www.tulsaschools.org/8_Employees/01_PROFESSIONAL_DEV/pdf/PDmasterplan.pdf">www.tulsaschools.org/8_Employees/01_PROFESSIONAL_DEV/pdf/PDmasterplan.pdf</a>	
My Learning Plan Resource Documents	Creating Effective District Professional Development Plans	<a href="http://www.mylearningplan.com/content/Docs/MLP_Learning_Paper_Creating%20PD%20Plans.pdf">www.mylearningplan.com/content/Docs/MLP_Learning_Paper_Creating%20PD%20Plans.pdf</a>	

## SAMPLE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLANS AND TEMPLATES

## SCHOOL SYSTEM FRAMEWORKS, continued

Location	Title	Web link	Notes
Duval County Public Schools, Jacksonville, Fla.	School Professional Development Template and Sample	<a href="http://www.duvalschools.org/static/aboutdcps/departments/acadprog/riverdeep/SchoolPDP_template_and_Sample.pdf">www.duvalschools.org/static/aboutdcps/departments/acadprog/riverdeep/SchoolPDP_template_and_Sample.pdf</a>	
New Jersey Department of Education, Trenton, N.J.	A Guidance Document for the School Professional Development Plan	<a href="http://www.state.nj.us/education/profdev/pd/teacher/pdguidance_school.pdf">www.state.nj.us/education/profdev/pd/teacher/pdguidance_school.pdf</a>	
Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureau of Career and Technical Education, Harrisburg, Pa.	Implementation Guide for Developing a School-wide Professional Development Plan	<a href="http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/document/1244830/bpi_plcprofgrowth_pdf">www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/document/1244830/bpi_plcprofgrowth_pdf</a>	

## SAMPLE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLANS AND TEMPLATES

## INDIVIDUAL PLANS

Location	Title	Web link	Notes
Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Jefferson City, Mo.	Sample Professional Development Plans and Logs	<a href="http://dese.mo.gov/divteachqual/leadership/pd_guidelines/documents/ProfessionalLearningGuidelinessection5withcover.pdf">http://dese.mo.gov/divteachqual/leadership/pd_guidelines/documents/ProfessionalLearningGuidelinessection5withcover.pdf</a>	
Vermont Northern Lights Career Development Center, Montpelier, Vt.	IPDP-Individual Professional Development Plan	<a href="http://northernlightscdc.org/career-pathways/ipdp-individual-professional-development-plan">http://northernlightscdc.org/career-pathways/ipdp-individual-professional-development-plan</a>	
Duval County Public Schools, Jacksonville, Fla.	Individual Professional Development Plan 2012-2013	<a href="http://www.duvalschools.org/static/aboutdcps/departments/prodev/downloads/IPDP_2012-13_Gr10_Intensive_Reading.pdf">www.duvalschools.org/static/aboutdcps/departments/prodev/downloads/IPDP_2012-13_Gr10_Intensive_Reading.pdf</a>	
Educational Service Center of Lake Erie West, Toledo, Ohio	Sample Individual Professional Development Plan Goals	<a href="http://www.esclakeeriewest.org/files/Sample-Goals.pdf">www.esclakeeriewest.org/files/Sample-Goals.pdf</a>	

Source: Killion, J. (2013). *Professional learning plans: A workbook for states, districts, and schools*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.



“Previously, there was not a lot of teacher involvement at the leadership level. Now they want to do it, can do it, and I empower them to do it.”

Principal Mandy Scott, Santa Fe (Texas) High School

## Is your school a Learning School?

The Learning School Alliance (LSA) is a yearlong program for schools committed to using a professional learning community approach to school improvement. School teams collaborate with experts to create a customized professional learning plan addressing your school’s most pressing challenges.



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To learn more, visit [www.learningforward.org/learning-opportunities/learning-school-alliance](http://www.learningforward.org/learning-opportunities/learning-school-alliance).



## Honest conversations are the cornerstone to building a culture of excellence

*I believe that the culture of a school and of each classroom within is shaped by our daily practices and that the most powerful practice of all is conversations. Schools and the students they serve succeed or fail one conversation at a time. But it's the quality of the conversations that matters. Conversations provide clarity or confusion, invite collaboration and cooperation or add concertina wire to the walls between well-defended fiefdoms. Conversations inspire us to tackle our toughest challenges or stop us dead in our tracks wondering why we bothered to get out of bed this morning.*

*A leader's job is to engineer conversations that produce epiphanies. Conversations that reveal we are capable of original thought. Intelligent, spirited conversations that are both intelligent and impassioned, providing clarity and impetus for action, for change when needed. And how wonderful it is to hear the hum of classroom conversations that nourish relationships and generate learning.*

— Susan Scott

### By Michelle Curry

When I first became superintendent, I felt prepared to raise student achievement in Orting (Wash.) School District, a rural district of 2,300 students in four schools. My goal was to create a culture of excellence — a healthy, professionally sustaining environment in which teachers are encouraged to do their best and students are highly engaged.

In any school system, culture can take on different definitions and norms, but it is the driving force behind whether all students succeed. Culture is how teachers interact with students or parents, how meetings are run at the school or boardroom, and how parents and the community are

embraced as partners in education. It is also how school facilities look and are maintained, the language we use with one another, and how we engage with students in and out of the classroom.

According to research cited in *Transforming School Culture* (Stolp & Smith, 1995), school culture was the most significant factor in determining the success of school restructuring. The authors concluded that strategies for improving school culture are crucial for any successful school reform and restructuring effort.

At the core of transforming school culture is the ability to have honest and meaningful conversations. We must have conversations and provide feedback in a way that's helpful and produces an outcome that moves the system forward.

Professional learning has given district office staff, principals, and teachers the tools for these conversations, but it starts with me. Not only must I initiate conversations that make a difference in the lives of students and staff, but I must also be able to hear and embrace feedback from stakeholders.

Susan Scott (2009) writes, "What is needed now is for leaders to become more open, more flexible, less egoistic, and less hypocritical. We must loosen our death grip on whatever we believe to be the truth simply because it is how we want the truth to look. We must be honest with ourselves and invite honesty from others."



Michelle Curry

In each issue of *JSD*, Susan Scott ([susan@fierceinc.com](mailto: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](http://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](http://www.learningforward.org). © Copyright, Fierce Inc., 2013.

As I continue to lead change in the district, I strive to make those words a reality through continual feedback, honest dialogue, and an openness to seek a diversity of opinion and possibilities.

A superintendent must be proactive in encouraging a climate of openness and candor, especially at the cabinet level. If cabinet members and principals are not pushing back on ideas, sharing different perspectives, and asking the tough questions, I'm not getting the critical feedback that will bring about improvements in our work to raise student achievement. Here are ways our district is seeking honest feedback.

### 1. BUILD A CULTURE OF ASSESSMENT AND HONEST EVALUATION.

The teacher-principal evaluation committee is helping the district transition from our current evaluation system to new evaluations mandated by the Washington legislature. This collaborative committee focused on teacher evaluation.

The Orting Education Association selected four members for the committee, and the superintendent selected four district officials. The committee met monthly over nine months to explore state requirements, Orting's framework for teacher evaluation, and implications for the district.

This school year, the district moved to the new evaluation system. Feedback, honest dialogue, and being open to a diversity of opinion and possibilities will continue to be an important part of this transition year.

### 2. MEET WITH STAFF AND FACULTY PERIODICALLY.

Two significant changes have affected district culture. The first was to establish the instructional council, a districtwide advisory group supporting student achievement. The council includes teachers, administrators,

and community members who serve one-year terms. The council reviews programs, courses, and initiatives throughout the district and makes recommendations to the superintendent about instructional areas, curriculum, resources, and materials.

In order to have high-quality and effective conversations about instruction, I purposely sought out individuals with diverse opinions and backgrounds. Committee selection is based on qualifications as well as an effort to include representatives from various grade levels, geographic areas, curriculum expertise, and ethnic backgrounds.

The other significant change was implementation of Friday collaboration days. These days allow time for professional learning and collaboration among teachers and staff during the school day through professional learning communities. Teachers need opportunities to learn together to deepen their content knowledge, learn research-based instructional strategies, coordinate curriculum, and address the increasing demands to implement standards in all schools.

As a result of this strategy, the district modified the elementary math program to meet new state standards, and the middle and high schools hired additional math teachers and instituted new programs. In addition, the district moved to a K-5 standards-based report card, and elementary teachers participated in professional learning to understand what students should be learning each trimester. The district created brochures for parents and family members to explain student learning goals.

### 3. OBTAIN FEEDBACK BY CONDUCTING A LEADERSHIP REVIEW.

Communication among all Orting School District stakeholders is a priority for me. I worked with the regional educational office to conduct an

independent communications audit of the district as well as my personal efforts to connect with all constituents.

A communications audit is a comprehensive evaluation of an organization's ability to send, receive, and share information with various audiences within the organization as well as key constituencies outside, such as parents and community members. The audit's purpose is to uncover the strengths and weaknesses.

Overall, the district received high marks. One area of improvement highlighted in the audit was the staff's desire to know more about work occurring in other schools. The audit also showed a desire for me to share more frequent updates on district initiatives.

While staff and stakeholders could respond anonymously to both face-to-face interview questions and a staff survey, most identified themselves. I attribute this comfort level and ability to provide critical feedback to the work the district has done to build a culture of excellence, where we can have the right conversations about the right issues that will raise student achievement and lead to professional growth.

This culture of excellence has created a strong foundation for the district to address academic and social issues that directly impact students and benefit staff in preparing all students for work and life.

### REFERENCES

Scott, S. (2009). *Fierce leadership: A bold alternative to the worst "best" practices of business today*. New York, NY: Broadway Business.

Stolp, S. & Smith, S. (1995). *Transforming school culture: Stories, symbols, values, & the leader's role*. Eugene, OR: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management.

Michelle Curry is superintendent of the Orting (Wash.) School District. ■

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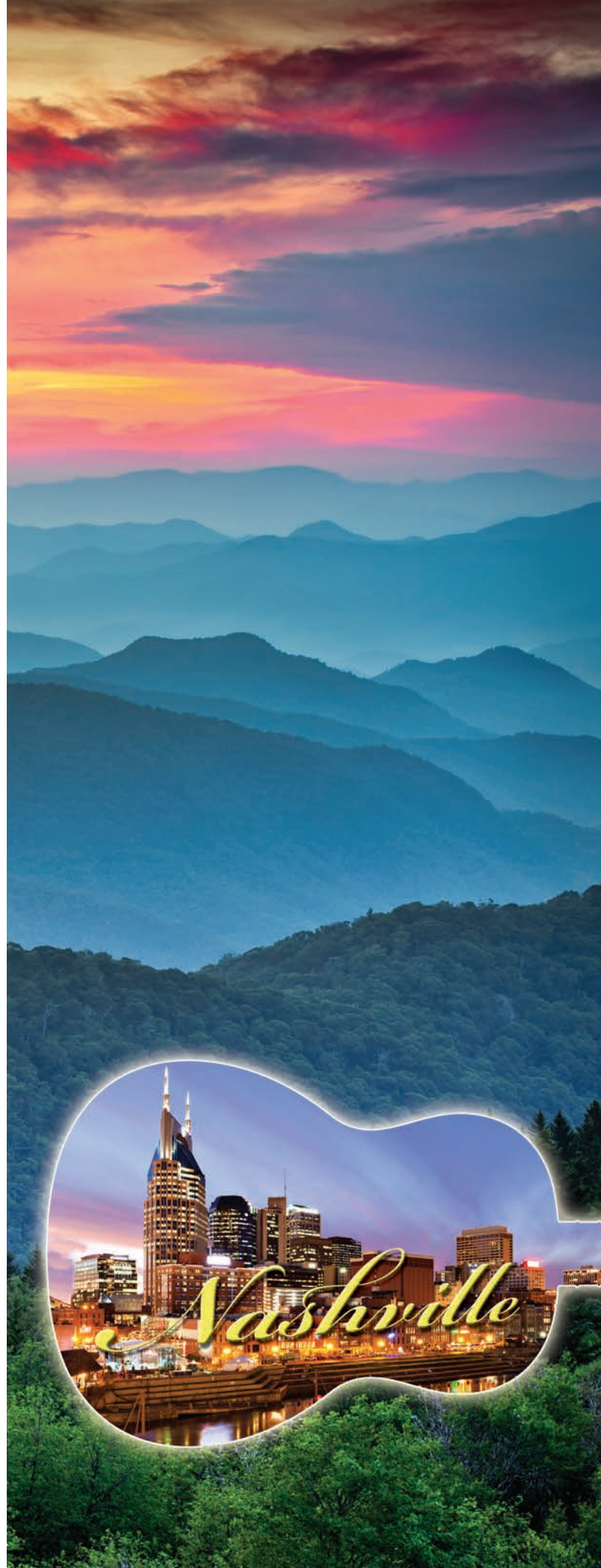
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**Partners in learning:**

Teacher leaders drive instructional excellence.

*By Victoria Duff and M. René Islas*

The 12 partnership districts in the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Supporting Effective Teaching Knowledge Development Initiative have spent the past two years building, modifying, and enhancing the roles and responsibilities of teacher leaders to strengthen the quality of school culture, improve the practice of teaching, and foster a deep commitment to professional growth. Six elements have emerged as key factors: Set the vision; identify the criteria; support leaders; communicate the work; build support; and monitor impact.

**Teachers rally around writing:**

Shared leadership transforms low-performing Colorado elementary.

*By Dana Frazee, Kay Frunzi, and Heather Hein*

In 2010, Sedalia (Colo.) Elementary was a low-performing school when principal George Boser arrived with a plan to transform the school's culture into one of high expectations and shared responsibility. Boser assembled a school leadership team, which led the development, implementation, and monitoring of the school improvement plan. Improved student results demonstrate the impact of shared leadership, and professional learning, shared leadership, and continuous improvement have become part of daily life at Sedalia.

**Critical conditions:**

What teacher leaders need to be effective in school.

*By Jill Harrison Berg, Christina A. Bosch, and Phomdaen Souvanna*

The Boston Teacher Leadership Certificate program was designed to build the leadership capacity of Boston's teachers by supporting experienced teacher leaders to design and facilitate graduate-level leadership development courses for their peers. Analyzing data from participants, program leaders identified four conditions most critical to teacher leaders' success — shared leadership, authority, trust, and time — and created discussion guides to generate focused conversations among school leadership teams.

**Empowerment zone:**

Coaching academy primes teachers to become instructional leaders.

*By Linda Mayer*

A northern New Jersey consortium created a Coaching Academy to develop coaches to work with early career teachers. The academy's goal was to build a cadre of instructional coaches who could provide increased classroom

support for teachers. Motivated by a passion to help peers succeed, a desire to gain understanding of coaching skills, and an eagerness to work outside of their home school, 40 teachers applied. At the end of the year, coaches reported increased efficacy, mutual learning, cross-pollination of school practices, and a breakdown of hierarchical barriers.

**Voices of equity:**

Beginning teachers are crucial partners and emerging leaders of equity education.

*By Nicole West-Burns, Karen Murray, and Jennifer Watt*

Beginning teachers have an opportunity to become emerging equity leaders — to make meaning of policies and act as advocates for educational equity in classrooms, schools, and boards. With that in mind, the Toronto District School Board created a professional learning module on culturally responsive and relevant classrooms. Beginning teachers engaged in a five-part collaborative inquiry that linked theory to practice. Teachers who participated reflected on their equity concerns and how to move forward as emerging leaders in equity education. From their reflections, five key insights emerged.

**Turn obstacles into opportunities:**

Team leaders use a skillful approach to move past barriers to learning.

*By Elisa B. MacDonald*

Regardless of who is leading or being led, every team seeking to improve student achievement comes up against hurdles. These hurdles generate distinct dilemmas for a team leader. No matter how much experience a team leader has, he or she is likely to be confronted with team hurdles, creating a dilemma of what to do. What distinguishes the skillful team leader from a less-effective leader is his or her approach to overcome these hurdles. This approach is rooted in the leader's values, mindset, intelligence, and skill.

**Virtual school, real experience:**

Simulations replicate the world of practice for aspiring principals.

*By Dale Mann and Charol Shakeshaft*

A web-enabled computer simulation program developed by researchers at Virginia Commonwealth University drops aspiring principals into the work of leading a virtual middle school over an academic year and then tracks their performance. The simulation presents real-world opportunities, problems, and challenges. As the pattern of a participant's decisions emerges, those choices affect the trajectory of the school: Teacher morale goes up or down, student-related metrics change, the attitudes of the principal's central office supervisors become more or less favorable.



**feature**



**Think summer:**

Early planning, teacher support boost summer learning programs.

*By Daniel Browne*

One of the more promising approaches to bridging the achievement gap is by expanding opportunities for learning, particularly in the summer. But what is the most effective way to build a summer learning program? A project funded by The Wallace Foundation examined summer programs in six districts to cull lessons on how to create programs that boost student achievement. The most successful programs start planning early, recruit the best teachers available, and give them the professional learning, support, and time they need to do their job well.

*This article is sponsored by The Wallace Foundation.*

**coming up**

in February 2014 *JSD*:

**SUCCESS STORIES: LESSONS LEARNED ON THE PATH TO EXCELLENCE**

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**columns**

**Collaborative culture:**

Honest conversations are the cornerstone to building a culture of excellence.

*By Susan Scott and Michelle Curry*

The superintendent of a small rural district in Washington searches for ways to encourage continuous feedback and open dialogue.

**From the director:**

Invite, invest, and unleash the potential of emerging leaders.

*By Stephanie Hirsh*

Every educator has the potential to lead. The challenge is to identify those educators who wish to exercise that potential to contribute to education outcomes beyond the classroom.

**Writing for JSD**

- Themes for the 2014 publication year are posted at [www.learningforward.org/publications/jsd/upcoming-themes](http://www.learningforward.org/publications/jsd/upcoming-themes).
- Please send manuscripts and questions to Christy Colclasure ([christy.colclasure@learningforward.org](mailto:christy.colclasure@learningforward.org)).
- Notes to assist authors in preparing a manuscript are at [www.learningforward.org/publications/jsd/writers-guidelines](http://www.learningforward.org/publications/jsd/writers-guidelines).

## Learning Forward elects new board members

Janet Samuels and Olivia Zepeda have been elected to Learning Forward's board of trustees.

Samuels, superintendent of Norristown School District in Norristown, Pa., is a 10-year member of Learning Forward. She was co-chair of the 2005 Annual Conference in Philadelphia and a member of the Conference Program Planning Committee.



Janet Samuels



Olivia Zepeda

Her vision is to further increase the visibility of Learning Forward by having it recognized by educators as the preeminent organization for educator development. Her goal is to have Learning Forward serve as a vehicle for developing a deeper understanding and implementation of the Standards for Professional Learning and expanding on local, state, and national levels.

Zepeda, assistant superintendent for Gadsden Elementary School District #32 in San Luis, Ariz., is a seven-year member of Learning Forward. She is a

graduate of the Learning Forward Academy and presented at conferences in 2006 and 2007.

Zepeda has worked extensively in Mexico to develop leadership and professional learning communities. She also organized and supported continuous and uninterrupted learning for migrant students who move regularly on the agricultural cycle to Salinas, Calif.

Zepeda's goal is to guide and support decisions and their implementation to increase the effectiveness of teachers, particularly for immigrant students, thus increasing all students' successful learning and achievement.

Members whose terms expire this year are past president Kenneth Salim and Mark Diaz. The new trustees will join the board at the conclusion of Learning Forward's 2013 Annual Conference in Dallas in December.

### book club

UNLEASHING THE POSITIVE POWER OF DIFFERENCES

Polarity Thinking in Our Schools

By Jane A.G. Kise

**D**oes 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:

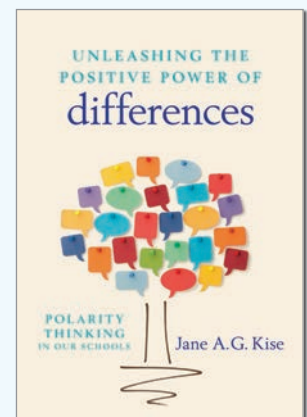
- **See it:** Recognize when you're dealing with two equally valuable perspectives on an issue.
- **Map it:** Identify the upsides and downsides of each position.
- **Tap it:** Apply strategies to leverage the best of both sides.

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](mailto:office@learningforward.org).





## Share the wheel for a smoother journey

When something changes in my life, it isn't always something I embrace with open arms. In fact, if I have not chosen that change for myself, I may struggle with it significantly.

Jeffrey Cufaude, a strategy consultant from Illinois, described this experience in his blog:

"When you're the driver, you've got control of the wheel and know not only where we're going, but each decision you're making along the way.

"In the passenger seat, things feel different. I don't have the same sense of control and comfort with our speed, direction, degree of the turns, etc. I can't prepare for your sudden veer left or rapid acceleration because I don't know they are coming. ... What's true in the car is also true for a change initiative. ... Just because people might be *hesitant* about a change doesn't mean they are ultimately *resistant* to it. Be careful you don't confuse the two" (Cufaude, 2012).

Most of us have times when we are in the driver's seat as well as times when we feel like we are in the passenger seat. For most of us, the driver's seat provides a much smoother, more comfortable ride. However, a willingness to share the wheel, especially when facing a significant trip,

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

### on board JEFF RONNEBERG

may result in reaching your destination more easily.

How does this analogy relate to our work in schools? I have yet to find a school or organization that isn't trying to initiate some type of change. I also have yet to find a system that successfully initiates and sustains change without effectively distributing leadership through all levels.

Change happens one person and conversation at a time. The effective leader develops the capacity of formal and informal leaders to provide support, as well as a necessary push at times, so colleagues are able to navigate the highs and lows they will experience through learning and change.

In the Spring Lake Park (Minn.) Schools, we smooth the way through ongoing communication and involving the "passenger" as a partner in planning. Yet, despite our best efforts, we never design the perfect road map for professional learning and change.

Thus, we need to continually see the system from the varying perspectives of leaders from all levels: classroom teachers, informal leaders, new and experienced staff, instructional coaches, learning technology coaches, curriculum leads, and principals. Each provides a unique view, offering real-time guidance so we can adjust our



path as necessary to provide the support and learning staff members need to persist through difficulties.

Ultimately, school and district leadership is about aligning the work of adults around ensuring that each student has a learning experience that results in their feeling valued, inspired, and seeing no limits to their future. This responsibility requires a willingness to not only listen to others' ideas and experiences, but also develop the capacities of leaders at all levels, allowing them to share the driver's seat to navigate change successfully.

#### REFERENCE

**Cufaude, J. (2012, December 3).** Things feel different in the passenger seat [Web log post]. Available at [www.ideaarchitects.org/2010/04/things-feel-different-in-passenger-seat.html](http://www.ideaarchitects.org/2010/04/things-feel-different-in-passenger-seat.html). ■

## FOUNDATION AWARDS IMPACT LEARNING LEADERSHIP

The Learning Forward Foundation is dedicated to impacting the future of leadership in schools that act on the belief that continuous learning by educators is essential to improving the achievement of all students.

The foundation awards grants and scholarships to individuals, teams, schools, and affiliates to further Learning Forward’s vision, “Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.”

Such support is possible because of donations from Learning Forward members and friends. So far this year, the foundation has raised almost \$13,000; the annual goal for 2013 is \$50,000.

To pledge your support, contribute online at [www.learningforward.org/foundation](http://www.learningforward.org/foundation) or print and mail a contribution card

from the website.

In recognition of donor support, the foundation is holding a donor appreciation drawing. One entry will be included in the drawing for every \$50 donated between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2013.

Prizes include:

- Learning Forward Comprehensive membership renewal;
- Five-day conference registration for you or a colleague;
- Two-night stay at a home in Arizona;
- Weekend in Chicago in a downtown condo; and
- Weekend in San Diego in a condo.

The drawing will be held in January 2014. Winners will be notified by email.

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### 15. Extent and nature of circulation

	Average number of copies of each issue during preceding 12 months	Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date
<b>a. Total number of copies</b>	6,765	6,000
<b>b. Paid and/or requested circulation</b>		
1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, and counter sales (not mailed)	None	None
2. Paid or requested mail subscriptions (include advertisers proof copies and exchange copies)	5,499	5,075
<b>c. Total paid and/or requested circulation</b>	5,499	5,075
<b>d. Free distribution by mail</b>	850	550
<b>e. Free distribution outside the mail</b>	None	None
<b>f. Total free distribution</b>	850	550
<b>g. Total distribution</b>	6,349	5,625
<b>Percent paid and/or requested circulation</b>	87%	90%
<b>h. Copies not distributed</b>		
1. Office use, leftovers, spoiled	416	375
2. Returns from news agents	None	None
<b>i. Total</b>	6,765	6,000
<b>Percent paid and/or requested circulation</b>	81%	84%

**16. Publication of statement of ownership** will be printed in the December 2013 issue of this publication.

**17. Signature and title of editor, publisher, business manager, or owner.** I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on this form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including multiple damages and civil penalties)

## INTRODUCING NEW PUBLICATIONS AND LEARNING OPTIONS

To better serve members' needs, Learning Forward is replacing its Summer Conference with a year-round learning plan and introducing a new mix of publications.

The Summer Conference, which focused on teacher leaders and other school-based leaders, will be replaced by a year-round coordinated plan for learning that integrates e-learning programs and webinars and leverages member publications and resources.

Members will be able to connect through multiple channels that will promote 24/7 engagement, networking, and knowledge creation. In addition, many sessions at the Annual Conference will highlight school-based professional learning.

Learning Forward's publications mix will also change. *JSD* and *Tools for Learning Schools* will continue. A new digital action brief, called *Transform Professional Learning*, combines aspects of *The Learning System*, *The Learning Principal*, and *The Leading Teacher* to examine Learning Forward's position on an essential professional learning topic along with tools to advance practitioner knowledge and skills.

This year's *Transform Professional Learning* topics are:

- Leveraging technology for professional learning.
- Working effectively with third-party providers.
- Evaluation of professional learning.
- Creating a supportive culture for learning.
- Achieving equity through the Standards for Professional Learning.

*Transform Professional Learning* will be published six times a year. Members will get a shareable summary of each issue highlighting key points to pass along to peers.

Another new digital publication is a series of knowledge briefs exploring the research and rationale underlying topics in effective professional learning. A summary of this publication will also be available to share with colleagues.

Members will continue to receive *JSD* and *Tools for Learning Schools* as they have been — in print or digitally, according to their membership category.

For more information, visit [www.learningforward.org/publications/new-and-improved-publications](http://www.learningforward.org/publications/new-and-improved-publications).

### LEARNING FORWARD CALENDAR

- Dec. 7-11:** Learning Forward's 2013 Annual Conference in Dallas, Texas.
- Jan. 31, 2014:** Proposal deadline for Learning Forward's 2014 Annual Conference in Nashville, Tenn.
- Feb. 15, 2014:** Deadline to submit articles for the October 2014 issue of *JSD*. Theme: Evolving role of central office.
- March 15, 2014:** Apply to join the next cohort of Learning School Alliance schools.
- March 15, 2014:** Apply to join Academy Class of 2016.
- April 15, 2014:** Deadline to submit articles for the December 2014 issue of *JSD*. Theme: Teacher evaluation.



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

**LEARNING FORWARD'S PURPOSE:** Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.

#### BUSINESS OFFICE

504 S. Locust St.  
Oxford, OH 45056  
513-523-6029, 800-727-7288  
Fax: 513-523-0638  
office@learningforward.org  
www.learningforward.org

#### LEARNING FORWARD STAFF

##### Executive director

Stephanie Hirsh  
stephanie.hirsh@learningforward.org

##### Director of strategy and development

Frederick Brown  
frederick.brown@learningforward.org

##### Director of communications

Tracy Crow  
tracy.crow@learningforward.org

##### Director of learning

Carol François  
carol.francois@learningforward.org

##### Director, Center for Results

M. René Islas  
rene.islas@learningforward.org

##### Director of business services

Leslie Miller  
leslie.miller@learningforward.org

##### Director of marketing

Robert Tess  
robert.tess@learningforward.org

##### Associate director of publications

Anthony Armstrong  
anthony.armstrong@learningforward.org

##### Associate director of e-learning

Tom Manning  
tom.manning@learningforward.org

##### Scholar laureate

Shirley Hord  
shirley.hord@learningforward.org

##### Senior advisor

Joellen Killion  
joellen.killion@learningforward.org

##### Distinguished senior fellow

Hayes Mizell  
hmizell@gmail.com

#### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Myra Whitney

## LEARNING EXCHANGE

<http://community.learningforward.org>

Through the Learning Exchange, Learning Forward members have access to a range of communities, including the Learning Lounge, where members recently shared their stories about professional learning's impact on practice. Join the Annual Conference community to get a deeper look at what the conference has to offer, connect with colleagues, and view discussion topics, blogs, and resources. Register for webinars focused on topics affecting today's professional learning leaders featuring leaders in the field or view archived webinars. Keep up with current events through Professional Learning News. To join the Learning Exchange, simply log in, customize your profile and privacy preferences, and adjust your subscription settings. Then you're ready to start networking.



## EDUCATION NATION

<http://bit.ly/17yg65b>

*Learning Forward Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh asked a panel of education journalists why daily continuous learning and collaboration isn't given more attention in media and policy:*

**"T**eachers tell us the one thing that they lack is the time to learn and collaborate with their colleagues. In the last session,



we heard about how great ideas need to be shared from classroom to classroom and school to school. We don't talk about that as a consistent national policy. I'd like to hear your opinion about that."

Watch Hirsh speak and hear the responses in this clip (at 14:59).

## TOOLS FOR LEARNING SCHOOLS

[www.learningforward.org/publications/tools-for-learning-schools](http://www.learningforward.org/publications/tools-for-learning-schools)

Celebrations are an important component for high-quality learning communities and critical to effective change. In the fall 2013 issue of *Tools for Learning Schools*, read how a middle school principal makes celebrations a norm in her school's learning community and brings people together during change efforts to celebrate each other's professional learning. Use the tools in this issue to plan your own celebrations. Using *A Dozen Reasons to Celebrate*, educators pause and reflect on their accomplishments or create a new beginning. With *Celebration Brainstorming*, participants discuss rationales for celebrations and recognition. *Planning Celebrations* engages participants in reflecting on powerful celebrations and planning celebrations for the year.



## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

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

How can teachers distinguish among all the professional learning opportunities that claim to be aligned with Common Core standards? In this blog post, Learning Forward Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh suggests teachers first clarify their needs and seek guidance and support from colleagues. If internal expertise and support don't exist to address the identified goals and needs, then teachers should look beyond the school for professional learning opportunities. Hirsh offers eight sets of guiding questions for evaluating professional learning options, using the Standards for Professional Learning, to assist teachers in making the best decisions possible.



Learning Forward's *Standards for Professional Learning* outlines the characteristics of professional learning that lead to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results.

## Connect with the standards.

The new e-book version adds more than 50 interactive tools and videos that will help you build your own mastery of the standards and then share them with others.

The *Standards for Professional Learning* book for the iPad provides more than 50 videos and interactive tools that bring the standards to life in new and engaging ways.



To learn more, visit [www.learningforward.org/standards/standards-book-for-the-ipad](http://www.learningforward.org/standards/standards-book-for-the-ipad).



## Invite, invest, and unleash the potential of emerging leaders

When I think about emerging leaders, and, in particular, their connection to professional learning and school improvement, I envision three stages to propelling such leaders forward: Invite, invest, and unleash. When we do this, new leaders will have the greatest impact on advancing an organization's mission to ensure that more educators and students learn and perform at high levels.

**Invite.** Every educator has the potential to lead. The challenge is to identify those educators who wish to exercise that potential to contribute to education outcomes beyond the classroom.

In a Learning Forward conference session years ago, I joined other national association executives in sharing our personal leadership journeys. We remembered people who had invited us to offer our points of view, get involved in new activities, and step up to lead. Before we knew it, we were on our own

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**Stephanie Hirsh** ([stephanie.hirsh@learningforward.org](mailto:stephanie.hirsh@learningforward.org)) is executive director of Learning Forward.

paths toward exercising leadership in any situation.

Each of us on the panel could recite a story of someone who had recognized our potential and invited us to take advantage of a leadership opportunity. Since then, I remind myself to constantly keep an eye out for others whom I can invite to lead. Educators have so much to give, and many are just waiting to be asked.

**Invest.** Organizations that want to cultivate emerging leaders will benefit from establishing multiple ways to engage and support them. School systems across the country refer to these development opportunities in different ways. They may include internally created formal academies, facilitated learning communities, externally supported leadership programs, or others.

Learning Forward has graduated more than 25 cohorts of professional learning leaders from its Academy, which prepares leaders to provide vision and leadership for professional learning in their organizations. The Learning School Alliance develops new knowledge and skills among leadership teams that build collective responsibility in a school.

**Unleash.** As emerging leaders gain clarity about their own potential and interests, they will begin to look for ways to exercise their voices. School systems and other organizations are

smart when they think about how they want to best leverage their emerging leaders.

However, this newly unleashed leadership may result in viewpoints and demands that they did not anticipate. For example, when a school system develops a leadership program to strengthen its classroom-to-administration pipeline, it may turn out that many participants are not interested in assuming formal leadership roles; rather, they are looking for ways to share their expertise in less formal settings. Districts that recognize this conundrum early will leverage their development opportunities to prepare emerging leaders for a variety of roles.

The field of professional learning offers many paths for emerging leaders to serve. We need leaders to act as mentors for new and struggling teachers; learning facilitators to guide the cycle of improvement at the team, department, and school levels; curriculum writers and model classroom facilitators; instructional coaches to support implementation of new practices and curriculum; principal facilitators; and more.

There are many emerging leaders who are passionate about teaching and who want to serve students, the profession, and the field of professional learning. We have a responsibility to invite, invest, and unleash so that others may benefit from their leadership and we move closer to our shared goals for all students. ■