LESSONS FROM RESEARCH:
IMPROVING STUDENTS' CIVIC LITERACY p. 66

Indiana district champions learning and leadership p. 10

WISDOM FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR p. 26

TODAY'S
CENTRAL OFFICE
PARTNERS IN LEARNING

SYSTEM LEADERS MASTER SKILLS TO ENCOURAGE BUY-IN p. 46

PD that inspires excellence.

Heinemann
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
DEDICATED TO TEACHERS

## Put the effectiveness of multifaceted PD to work for you and your school.

The preeminent author-experts in contemporary PD.

Heinemann's author-experts are well known. Our authors and their trained consultants are available to work directly with your school or district, either in customized programs or through workshops and webinars.

New ideas, new curriculum, new modes of delivery.

Our Professional Development offerings are constantly evolving to provide the most insightful and up-to-date subject matter. Your staff will receive top quality instruction however best suits your needs—on-site, online, and off-site.
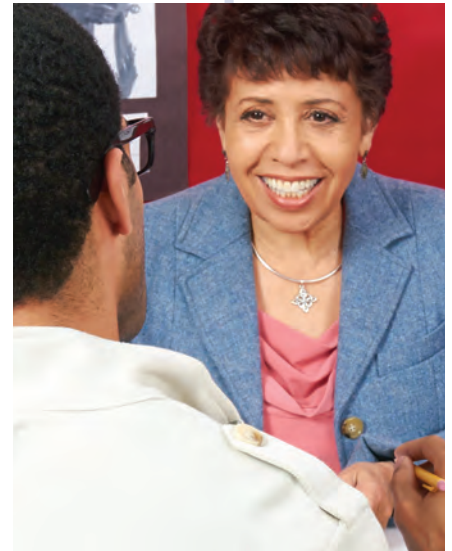
The power of customized PD.

For a program to be truly effective, it needs to be customized to your specific needs and focused around your unique circumstances and objectives. Let our experts and their trained consultants work with you to create the perfect solution to fulfill your particular PD requirements.

Meeting educators where they are.

On-Site PD
- School-Based Seminars
- Speakers & Consulting Authors
- Residency Programs

Online PD
- Digital Campus
- Live Webinars
- Blended PD

Off-Site PD
- Multi-Day Institutes
- One-Day Workshops
- Custom PD Events

heinemann.com/pd

What a cutting-edge central office staff needs to know

As we talk about how those who work in today's central office contribute to transformative professional learning systems, we consider how they serve other educators in different ways than they used to. We recognize central office staff members' shifting roles and responsibilities.

How does that affect what such educators need to learn? The effective professional learning leader must tend to her own learning needs every bit as much as she does the needs of other educators in the system. As Fort Wayne Community Schools superintendent Wendy Robinson says, "My role as superintendent is to be the district's chief learner and to model that." (See p.10 for more about her district.)

Learning Forward's cycle of continuous improvement outlines a process for determining an educator's most pressing learning needs based on students' high-priority learning needs. At the same time, district leaders have a responsibility to keep themselves at the cutting edge to move their systems forward. They also have the daunting task to keep the district's learning and multiple initiatives focused, integrated, and coherent.

Given these multiple demands, I suggest several critical learning topics for central office staff members — and these

•

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

will be relevant for technical assistance providers and other educators, too.

Who's going to become your district's expert in **learning organizations and systems thinking?** With the need to support continuous improvement processes in multiple locations, any district-level leader would benefit from a deep understanding of Peter Senge and Margaret Wheatley, as well as Learning Forward's latest book, *Becoming a Learning System.*

Someone in your district should assume the mantle of **innovation guru**. New strategies, unique solutions, and strange possibilities pop up all the time, and they don't always come from education. TED talks and magazines such as *Fast Company* and *Wired* offer good information, while hard-core geeks stay current through Twitter feeds and daily Internet browsing.

Who in your office is an **articulate advocate for effective professional learning?** More than one leader needs to have the knowledge and skills to do this, and, in the best-case scenarios, one of those leaders is the superintendent. However, messages about the power of the right kinds of professional learning should come from every corner. How can you contribute, and what do you need to learn to do so?

Is your district office fully prepared to **support principals as instructional leaders?** This is critical for system-level leaders. "The principal's job has changed over the last decade, going from a role that revolved around 'buses,
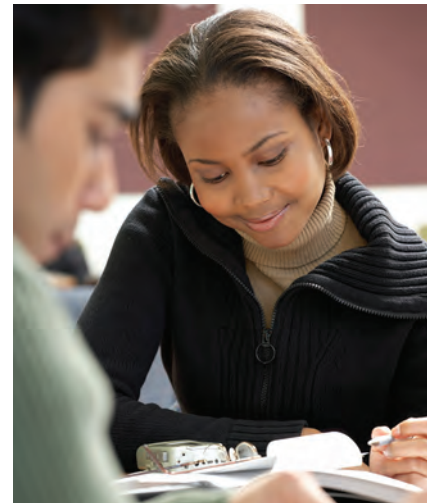
boilers, and books' to one that centers on promoting high-quality teaching and learning in classrooms. But in most districts, the principal supervisor's job hasn't yet adapted to that change." Turn to p. 46 to see how The Wallace Foundation is responding.

Do the folks in your district know where to turn for **research about high-impact professional learning?** While Learning Forward is one source for such information (see Joellen Killion's column on p. 66), your district might need data about specific models for specific purposes. Local universities can often provide valuable access to research journals.

This list is just a start on what topics the well-rounded central office needs to cover. What else are you studying to be your best? We're always eager to hear your thoughts and questions. ■

learning forward
NASHVILLE
2014 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
DEC. 6–10, 2014

5 reasons you should attend Learning Forward's Annual Conference in Nashville.

1 Experience **keynote speakers** John Hattie, Steve Gross, and TED-style talks by Barrington Irving Jr., Pearl Arredondo, and Michael Ungar.

2 Dig deep with **preconference sessions** and **thought leader lectures** by Jim Knight, Marcia Tate, Carol Ann Tomlinson, Steve Barkley, Thomas Guskey, Kenneth Williams, Michael Fullan, Andy Hargreaves, and more.

3 Investigate the latest in **technology**, **tools**, **resources**, and an **innovative professional development (iPD) showcase** in the exhibit hall.

4 Explore **new learning formats**, including networking meet-ups, Ignite presentations, and the Learning Hangout, which features engaging hands-on sessions using mobile devices.

5 Delve into over **300 concurrent sessions** on teacher rounds, grading and assessment, blended learning, motivating and engaging students, flipped design, teacher induction, principal evaluation, and more.

essentials

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP
The Changing Role of the Principal: How High-Achieving Districts Are Recalibrating School Leadership
Center for American Progress, 2014

This report examines the changing landscape of school leadership. Although teacher evaluation reform is not its primary focus, the report discusses the components of certain appraisal systems and the demands they place on school leaders in terms of expertise and time — demands that have prompted some school districts to consider more proactive ways to support principals and successful implementation of teacher evaluation reform at the building level. The report uses case studies to illustrate ways in which districts train and support school leaders, such as coaching and instructional feedback, custom professional learning, streamlining the principal's duties, and partnerships with universities and nonprofits to support the next generation of principals.
www.americanprogress. org/issues/education/ report/2014/07/01/93015/the-changing-role-of-the-principal

TEACHERS ON COMMON CORE
From Adoption to Practice: Teacher Perspectives on the Common Core
Education Week Research Center, 2014

To better understand teachers' views on the Common Core State Standards, the Education Week Research Center invited users of edweek.org to participate in an online survey. A majority of respondents said they have received some professional development on the Common Core, but nearly eight in 10 report wanting more. The most useful forms of professional learning cited involve collaborative planning time, professional learning communities, structured learning opportunities, and job-embedded coaching. Educators report feeling moderately prepared to teach the Common Core. However, their confidence drops for certain student groups, particularly English language learners and students with disabilities.
www.edweek.org/media/ewrcteacherscommoncore2014.pdf

AMERICANS ON SCHOOLS
The PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools
Phi Delta Kappa International, 2014

This year's poll confirms last year's results: A majority of Americans don't support public education initiatives that they believe were created or promoted by federal policymakers. Among the findings:
- 56% say local school boards should have the greatest influence in deciding what is taught;
- 60% oppose the Common Core State Standards; and
- 54% don't believe standardized tests help teachers.

Americans continue to assign higher grades to their local schools but far lower grades to the nation's schools in general.
http://pdkpoll.pdkintl.org/

COACHING AND PLANNING TOOLS
Instructional Practice Guide
Achieve the Core, 2014

The Instructional Practice Guide includes coaching and lesson planning tools to help teachers and those who support teachers to make the shifts in instructional practice required by the Common Core State Standards. In order for coaching conversations between teachers, colleagues, and instructional leaders to be

meaningful and productive, there must be shared expectations about the criteria for planning and observing lessons. These tools are framed around the shifts required by the Common Core and can be used to facilitate conversations between teachers and coaches. The tools help establish clear connections between lesson planning and classroom instruction.
http://achievethecore.org/page/969/ instructional-practice-guide-list-pg

REDUCING TURNOVER
On the Path to Equity: Improving the Effectiveness of Beginning Teachers
Alliance for Excellent Education, July 2014

Roughly half a million U.S. teachers either move or leave the profession each year. To curb turnover, especially among new teachers, the report recommends a comprehensive induction program comprised of multiple types of support, including high-quality mentoring, common planning times, and ongoing support from school leaders. Teachers who receive such support have higher levels of job satisfaction, rate higher in their classroom teaching practices, and are associated with higher levels of student achievement. The report highlights the work of the New Teacher Center, which has established an evidence-based induction model for beginning teachers that increases teacher retention, improves classroom effectiveness, and advances student learning.
http://all4ed.org/reports-factsheets/path-to-equity

EDUCATOR ENGAGEMENT
Engaging Educators:
A Reform Support Network Guide for States and Districts
Reform Support Network, 2012

The case for engaging educators is simple and compelling. If students are to meet the expectations of college-and-career-ready standards and we are to close achievement gaps, it will be because committed educators — teachers, principals, district and state leaders — empower themselves to work together to this end. Educator engagement is necessary for successful implementation of reform, but its purpose is greater: Ultimately, educator engagement is the basis for advancing the profession in education and improving student performance. This guide outlines a framework for educator engagement that includes a variety of strategies states, school districts, and unions can use to lay the groundwork. The framework can also be applied to other groups of educators, including building- and district-level administrators.
www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/implementation-support-unit/tech-assist/engaging-educators.pdf

STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES
Enriching Student-Centered Practices in Your School: An Interactive Tool for Teachers and School Leaders
Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, 2014

The Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education has created an online tool kit to help schools learn ways to implement student-centered practices in their own schools and classrooms. The tool includes features of student-centered schools, video examples of student-centered practices, and reflection questions for educators to use when integrating practices in their classrooms and schoolwide. The tool kit is designed for use by small groups of educators in a collaborative setting and includes step-by-step instructions for using the tool.
https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/node/1215

TODAY'S CENTRAL OFFICE:

Are we stuck in the past or moving ahead?

On your own or with a team, use these survey questions to surface perspectives on how your district office has shifted its approach, responsibilities, and support for standards-based professional learning. Use the questions to engage in discussion about what shifts might be valuable.

		STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1	Our district office has made significant shifts to ensure professional learning is effective, efficient, and equitable.					
2	Most members of our district office staff are knowledgeable about effective professional learning.					
3	Most members of our district office staff establish or advocate for resources, policies, and practices tied to effective professional learning.					
4	Most members of our district office staff have roles and responsibilities that align with and support systemwide effective professional learning.					
5	Most members of our district office staff help educators at the school level understand professional learning.					
6	Most of the support our district office provides is aligned with Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning.					

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

PLAN LEARNING EFFECTIVELY

At whatever level they work in a system, educators are more likely to achieve impact through professional learning when that learning is planned carefully. *Professional Learning Plans: A Workbook for States, Districts, and Schools* offers a seven-step planning process that begins with needs analysis and cycles through to evaluation and implementation.

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

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLANS: A WORKBOOK FOR STATES, DISTRICTS, AND SCHOOLS

learningforward
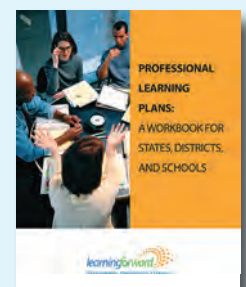
WHAT SUPERINTENDENTS SAY

Gallup and *Education Week* launched a panel focused on U.S. superintendents to track and understand their opinions on important topics and issues facing education. Gallup surveys these leaders every quarter on an annual basis. Here are key findings on professional learning from the inaugural study.

Gallup-*Education Week* survey results

Three in 10 (30%) superintendents strongly agree that their school district has an effective ongoing professional development program designed for teachers. Less that two in 10 (17%) superintendents strongly agree that their school district has an effective ongoing professional development program designed for principals.

On a five-point scale, where **5 means strongly agree** and **1 means strongly disagree**, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.

		1 STRONGLY DISAGREE	2	3	4	5 STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW, DOESN'T APPLY
A	My school district has an effective ongoing professional development program designed for teachers.	1%	5%	20%	44%	30%	0%
B	My school district has an effective ongoing professional development program designed for principals.	3%	13%	29%	37%	17%	1%

SOURCE: Gallup. (2013, June 6). *Gallup-Education Week superintendent panel — Inaugural survey findings.* Washington, DC: Author.

TAKE THE FIRST STEP TO IMPROVE RESULTS

Hayes Mizell, Learning Forward's distinguished senior fellow, says the Gallup/EdWeek survey results are informative and sobering:

"Some leaders regard professional development as a routinized component of the school system that drifts from year to year with little coherent direction, oversight, or assessment. Where this is the case, professional development has little impact, and it ultimately leads to low expectations and benign neglect. Superintendents may not invest in developing 'an effective ongoing professional development program' because they don't believe it's worth their effort. …

"Many superintendents retain a mental model of professional development formed by their past inappropriate staff development experiences. These superintendents now need to educate themselves about new standards and modes of professional learning that are yielding impressive results in school systems that take them seriously. That is the first step toward more positive responses to future Gallup/*EdWeek* surveys."

Mizell

SOURCE: Mizell, H. (2013, July 16). *Superintendents need a new view on professional learning.* Available at http://bit.ly/1xfgAOB.

A DECADE OF GROWTH

In the last decade, Fort Wayne Community Schools has worked to:

- **Develop** strong leaders. With financial support from The Wallace Foundation over nine years, the district put best practices in leadership in place, creating a data-driven decision-making process, new teacher induction, and a quality improvement team at every school.

- **Establish** the district's vision, mission, core values, and goals.

- **Develop** a balanced scorecard data management system that allows the district and individual schools to analyze trends through an array of indicators, including SAT scores, attendance, or student performance on state standardized tests. The balanced scorecard is a strategic planning and management system used extensively in business and industry, government, and nonprofit organizations worldwide to align business activities to an organization's vision and strategy.

- **Hire** at least one instructional coach for every school, creating a systemwide network of support through coaching.

- **Partner** principals with administrator coaches.

CHAMPIONS

DISTRICT LEADERS BUILD SKILLS TO BOOST EDUCATOR PRACTICE

**By Kay Psencik,
Frederick Brown,
Laura Cain,
Ramona Coleman,
and
C. Todd Cummings**

At a turnaround high school where staff had experienced four leaders in as many years, a first-year principal brought teachers together to change the way they work. He zeroed in on a few strategic goals and asked teachers to collaborate around those. Then, along with the administrative team, he provided the support they needed.

"When we introduced a writing assessment for all 350 of our sophomores that we administered three times over the year, about 15 administrators, instructional coaches, and guidance coun-

of LEARNING
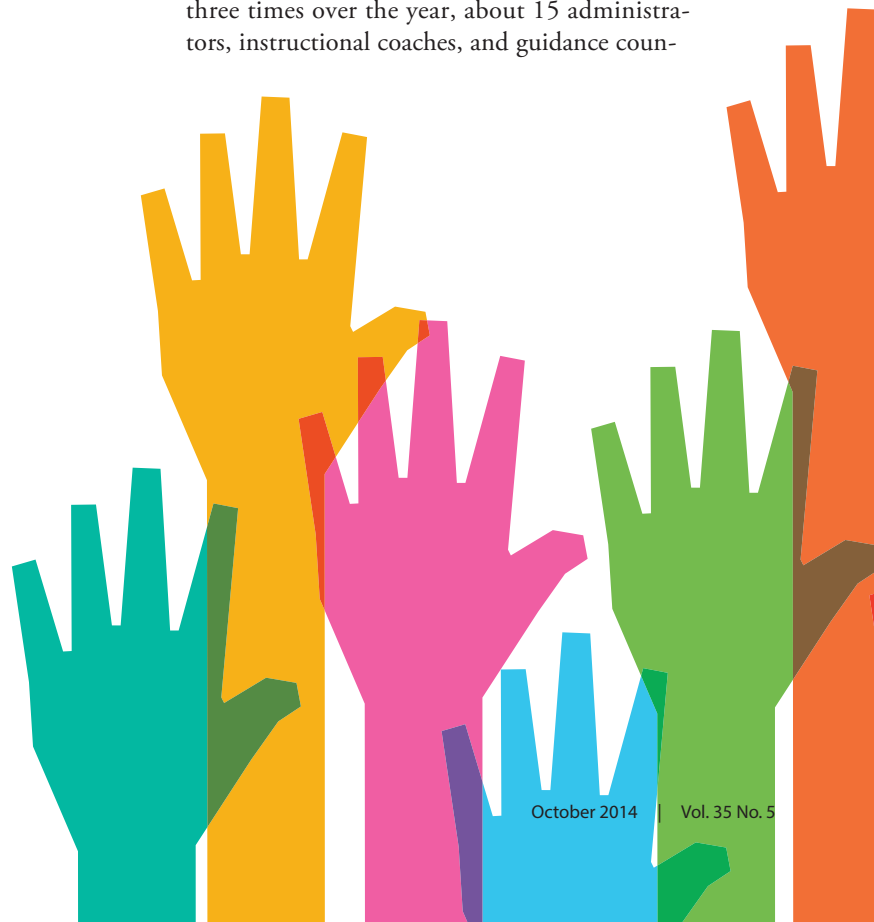
selors joined with the teachers, and each took a stack of student essays to score," said John Houser, principal of Wayne High School in Fort Wayne (Indiana) Community Schools. "We spent time together looking at the rubric so that everyone was comfortable scoring. That helped create trust among our staff that leadership supports them."

Houser created time for professional learning teams to meet and helped teachers understand that a cycle of improvement includes designing a lesson, teaching it, then returning to their learning team with samples of student work to score the work together using a rubric.

"All the work is starting to make a positive difference in teachers' minds that students can achieve at a higher level," Houser said. "They have more faith in the leadership, more confidence in themselves, and more confidence in the students. We've really changed the culture of the building with our kids and with our staff."

That culture is emblematic of changes throughout Fort Wayne Community Schools. Houser learned from the district's efforts to lead with a focus on professional learning, develop skills, and support educators in making changes that will improve student learning.

Fort Wayne Community Schools continues to increase student learning and meet state and national standards and expectations annually based on several factors that have made a difference for educators within the system: district and principal leadership, learning teams, effective learning designs, and deep commitment to a culture of learning.

LEADERSHIP

Fort Wayne understands that the superintendent's leadership matters. Superintendent Wendy Robinson and the district's board of trustees committed themselves to creating a learning culture within the district. Robinson developed a clear pic-

tool BONUS

Protocol for establishing a theory of change, pp. 22-24

DEFINITION OF LEADERSHIP

Leaders, through disciplined thoughts and actions, create and sustain the conditions that ensure achievement of our moral purpose by:

- Shaping a shared vision and commitment to action for academic and social success for all students;

- Developing systems that support students and adults;

- Modeling and cultivating courageous leadership; and

- Distributing responsibility for people, data, and processes that nurtures a culture of continuous improvement and empowerment.

DEFINITION OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

In Fort Wayne Community Schools, professional learning is a comprehensive, sustained, and strategic approach to increase educator effectiveness and results for all students. Professional learning fosters collective responsibility for improved student performance and:

1. Is aligned with a rigorous academic curriculum and district improvement goals;

2. Occurs in professional learning communities at all levels throughout the district;

3. Is ongoing and facilitated by skilled staff using a variety of researched-based learning designs;

4. Engages established learning communities in a cycle of continuous improvement; and

5. Is monitored and evaluated as to its effectiveness to inform ongoing improvement and results.

Source: Fort Wayne Community Schools.

---

ture for herself of the superintendent's responsibilities, built on her deep history in the district as a teacher, principal, and district-level administrator. Robinson's commitment to being the lead learner is evidenced by her deepening her own understanding and skills needed to lead standards-driven professional learning.

"My role as superintendent is to be the district's chief learner and to model that," she said. "As a part of my work with the cabinet, we are developing what professional learning means in the district. … We talk a lot about the district office being a resource for schools, and how that idea has to be more than just lip service. Our role at the district office is to know our schools well" (Hirsh, Psencik, & Brown, 2014).

> **"My role as superintendent is to be the district's chief learner and to model that," said Wendy Robinson, Fort Wayne Community Schools superintendent.**

Robinson sought out leaders in professional learning to partner in this work and, in conjunction with Learning Forward, began to develop a deeper understanding of professional learning and ways of ensuring that every teacher in the district experiences effective professional learning every day so that every student achieves.

A LEADERSHIP LEARNING COMMUNITY

Robinson set the tone for learning, beginning with the central office administration. She established a district leadership team whose members would become a learning community that would lead by example.

Leadership team members developed a common language around professional learning. They studied the principles of professional learning, Learning Forward's Standards for Pro-fessional Learning, and Learning Forward's definition of professional learning. They read and discussed *The Learning Educator* (Hirsh & Killion, 2007) to clarify foundational principles and defined their view by creating their own definition of leadership and effective professional learning (see box above).

The district also clarified its vision of what staff would be doing when the district became an effective learning system. (See table on p. 14.)

The district developed a theory of change (see p. 16) to clarify its expectations for reaching improved student outcomes. All of this work guides the change process, and the leadership team infuses professional learning into all aspects of administrators' work, from curriculum to human resources to the business office.

Next, key members of the district learning community joined the Learning Forward Academy, along with principals from elementary, middle, and high schools. 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, or organization.

This team also became a learning community. As team members focused their problem of practice on strengthening student and staff learning, they strengthened district-level and principal learning communities. The academy group has developed high levels of trust, and members are assuming leadership among peers.

Ingrid Laidroo-Martin, principal of Irwin Elementary School, says, "My involvement in Learning Forward Academy and district leadership team has helped me focus on strategies for

KASAB CHART FOR PRINCIPALS AS LEADERS OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

A KASAB (knowledge, attitude, skills, aspirations, and behaviors) chart is a process of declaring essential roles and responsibilities in implementing an innovation in a learning system.

KASAB	PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	PERSONALIZATION	PRECISION
Knowledge: Conceptual understanding of information, theories, principles, and research.	• Understand the Standards for Professional Learning, principles, and definition of professional learning.	• Understand the concepts of personalization as they relate to adult learning.	• Understand the laser-focus strategies to meet unique learning needs of each stakeholder.
Attitude: Beliefs about the value of particular information or strategies.	• Value professional learning as a key lever for improving leadership and teaching practice at scale.	• Value the importance of differentiating adult learning based on individual learning styles and identified needs.	• Hold the belief that laser-focused actions will significantly improve stakeholder performance.
Skills: Strategies and processes to apply knowledge.	• Facilitate a cycle of continuous improvement to develop collective responsibility to achieve Fort Wayne Community Schools' moral purpose.	• Evaluate, differentiate, monitor, and reassess individualized learning plans for adults.	• Continuously and consistently assess effective strategies for improvement.
Aspirations: Desires, or internal motivation, to engage in a particular practice.	• Aspire to increase everyone's effectiveness through professional learning systems.	• Provide differentiated, targeted professional learning that inspires adult learners to actively participate in their own professional growth.	• Instill ownership for increased performance of all stakeholders.
Behaviors: Consistent application of knowledge and skills.	• Create and strengthen professional learning systems; build relationships (1.1.3 & 1.2.3). • Establish collaborative environments; learning community; collective responsibility (1.1.3 & 1.2.3). • Support the development of teacher leaders (1.1.4).	• Distribute leadership (1.1.4 & 1.1.5). • Be able to take all sources of data and interpret those data to inform action plans to help school reach their goals (2.3.3). • Develop emotional intelligence (ability to be self-aware and support emotional needs of others) (2.1.1). • Develop a student-centered culture (1.2.1, 1.2.3, 2.2.1, & 2.3.1).	• Hire the best teachers and principals and support them (1.1.1, 1.1.2, & 1.1.3). • Recognize and support rigorous instruction (2.3.1 & 2.3.2). • Facilitate teams of teachers to build effective units of study around Common Core and design effective assessments.

Numbers in parentheses align with the Indiana State RISE rubric for evaluating administrators.   **Source:** Fort Wayne Community Schools.

meaningful collaboration with my peers. This has assisted me in my work with the professionals in my own building to engage in standards-driven, job-embedded professional learning."

Federa Smith, principal of Adams Elementary, agrees. "Through the work we are doing with Learning Forward and the help of my peers, peer collaboration, common planning,

and data analysis have become routine at Adams Elementary," Smith says. "As I apply what I am learning, teacher effectiveness is increasing, and that effectiveness is positively impacting student achievement."

Robinson also established a team of district-level administrators and principals to break down barriers between central

and site leaders and build collective responsibility for student learning. Academy members emerged as natural leaders for this group. Academy members helped facilitate the group's understanding of the standards, establish protocols and practices that help in school-level learning, and develop effective learning designs.

Learning Forward facilitators realized early on that if district staff were to internalize the definition of and Standards for Professional Learning, they needed time to apply the concepts and to observe the outcomes so that educators began to think in new ways.

District leadership team members systematically work with school principals and school leadership teams to ensure that site-based staff internalize the work. They observe school leadership team meetings, conduct walk-throughs in buildings, and observe one another facilitating professional learning for principals. Principals work as communities of learners to achieve the district's goals. Leaders are emerging from all aspects of the organization, and they value what they are learning.

"For so long, we have focused on the learning of students," says Matt Schiebe, principal of Shawnee Middle School. "What I am learning from my peers and our work with Learning Forward is that we need to focus on the learning of adults. I have to say that I have grown more humble as I work with my fellow principals through these efforts to build authentic learning communities in our schools. I have grown to respect the expertise of my fellow administrators and look to them for ideas. They are also challenging my thinking as a leader.

"Because of our collaboration, I have learned more this year than many years in the past. My learning has had a major impact on the teachers I serve and the students in our school. … We have a long way to go, but we know now we can do it."

THE LEARNING DESIGN

Facilitators, along with the district superintendent and lead-
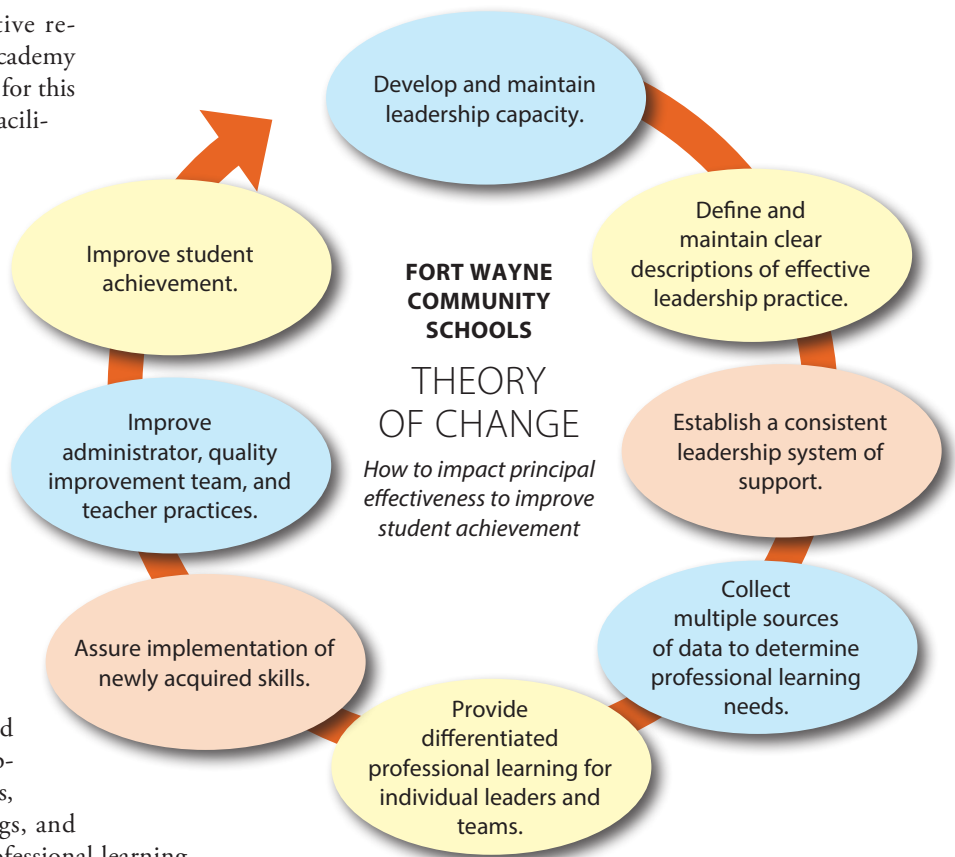
> **"I have grown to respect the expertise of my fellow administrators and look to them for ideas. They are also challenging my thinking as a leader," said Matt Schiebe, principal of Shawnee Middle School.**

FORT WAYNE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

THEORY OF CHANGE

How to impact principal effectiveness to improve student achievement

Develop and maintain leadership capacity.

Define and maintain clear descriptions of effective leadership practice.

Establish a consistent leadership system of support.

Collect multiple sources of data to determine professional learning needs.

Provide differentiated professional learning for individual leaders and teams.

Assure implementation of newly acquired skills.

Improve administrator, quality improvement team, and teacher practices.

Improve student achievement.

ership team, established a learning design that is continuously modified based on feedback from the district leadership team and the core of administrators in the district. The design is a combination of on-site and phone conversations over five years:

- Working with Learning Forward over three to five years, the district leadership team engaged in five intensive, results-driven courses based on the Standards for Professional Learning.
- Administrators learned to understand and use the principles established in *The Learning Educator* (Hirsh & Killion, 2007), Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning, and Innovation Configuration maps to facilitate professional learning for all administrators and schools' quality improvement teams. Innovation Configuration (IC) maps identify and describe the major components of the standards in operation, helping those in various roles understand the actions they should take as part of systemwide implementation.
- Each course of study is designed to engage learners in the practices and protocols of a learning community and to establish protocols such as board policy on professional learning, a chart identifying changes that occur as a result of learning (see above), a theory of change around principal

The Annual Conference on
Standards & Assessment

APRIL 13–15, 2015   PHOENIX, ARIZONA

Gauge what they know. Transform how they learn.

Strengthen your approach to assessment with research-based, equitable techniques for satisfying 21st century learning requirements. Join our lineup of experts to discover how to create standards-based assessments that will monitor students' progress and enrich the learning process. You'll hear dynamic keynotes packed with tools, tips, and templates for successful assessment. The presenters will customize your experience by sharing best practices and implementation strategies, as well as answering your questions in breakout sessions.

PRESENTERS

Tim Brown

Cassandra Erkens

Douglas Fisher

Thomas R. Guskey

Timothy D. Kanold

Angela LaBounty

Jay McTighe

Meg Ormiston

Mary Kim Schreck

Susan Udelhofen

Register by January 8 and save!
solution-tree.com/TACSA
 #tacsa

Solution Tree

learning, and agendas for principal institutes.

- Facilitators designed full-day monthly sessions to reflect on how the new skills were being applied, practice strategies and protocols, design learning experiences, and ensure follow-through.
- District leadership team members engaged in phone conversations and coaching sessions with Learning Forward facilitators to work through issues and test ideas.
- Principals and district leaders in the Learning Forward Academy take the lead in facilitating cabinet members and core leadership team members in designing professional learning for all principals in the district, including the summer institute. They determine the most effective professional learning design to match learners' needs and develop participants' knowledge and skills based on district goals.

OWNING THE LEARNING

As the district leadership team defined leadership and professional learning for themselves, they asked the entire administrative staff to join them, offer feedback, and assist in revising the work so that all owned and understood the definitions.

The district leadership team applied the concepts and protocols of what they were learning to their own work with administrators and designed a yearlong approach to ensure everyone understood Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning and what it really means to be a learning system.

The team challenged all district directors and school principals to commit to applying professional learning standards in work at schools.

Here are some examples:

- The finance department applied the principles and Standards for Professional Learning as they launched the new budget preparation. They designed an approach to learning for school leaders to not only understand the budget issues and development processes but to engage in the work so that the budget is designed collaboratively.
- District leaders responsible for the school improvement plans redesigned the format and development process to ensure that the plans were based on the district's theory of change and all professional learning aligned with the standards. By applying what they were learning and getting participant feedback, district leaders began to shape a cycle of continuous improvement.
- District leadership team members applied the theory of change, sharing their work with principals and helping the principals develop their skills. Most important in their theory of change was developing a strong principal corps with individuals who could lead learning not only at their schools but with one another. Now, principals are taking ownership for leading other principals' learning.

Your Passion
for Literacy
Leads to Regent

Chonita Walker chose to earn her Reading Specialist endorsement at Regent University because of the school's reputation for delivering leading-edge, values-based teaching. Chonita says Regent delivered flawlessly. Now she offers academic solutions for the many children who struggle with reading in her district. Discover how Regent, recognized for its top online programs by *U.S. News & World Report*, can help you fulfill your passion.

VDOE Endorsements:
Administration & Supervision | ESL
Gifted Education | Math Specialist
Reading Specialist

EDU140568

APPLY TODAY.
regent.edu/success | 888.713.1595

REGENT UNIVERSITY | School of Education

Christian Leadership to Change the World

LEARNING FOR THE LONG HAUL

Remaining focused has been a challenge in the midst of massive state changes, including new teacher and principal evaluation systems, Common Core State Standards that were then replaced with a state curriculum, and new state assessments. In addition, district leaders won a Teacher Incentive Fund grant and must meet that grant's goals.

Fort Wayne Community Schools leaders remain committed, however, to ensuring that each innovation is implemented according to the district's theory of change or is infused with the Standards for Professional Learning. Leaders recognize that change takes time.

Some changes occur more rapidly, such as when a state shifts its approach to curriculum or institutes new assessment procedures, but district leaders understand that improving learning for adults to enable them to make the most thoughtful decisions about students' academic needs over the long term will help raise student achievement.

"All of us have to hold each other accountable for the learning," says Superintendent Robinson. "We have to put processes and systems in place so the work we are doing is sustainable. I know we are just in the middle of this work, and I am impatient, but change is not instant, and we have to stay the course.

"But when I go into a school and observe the processes we have been working on actually happening — even when they were not expecting us to come — I know we are making a difference through this work. Every adult and every child is benefiting."

REFERENCES

Hirsh, S. & Killion, J. (2007). *The learning educator.* Oxford, OH: NSDC.

Hirsh, S., Psencik, K., & Brown, F. (2014). *Becoming a learning system.* Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

•

Kay Psencik (kay.psencik@learningforward.org) is a senior consultant and Frederick Brown (frederick.brown@learningforward.org) is deputy executive director at Learning Forward. Laura Cain (laura.cain@fwcs.k12.in.us) is assistant to the superintendent for strategic initiatives, Ramona Coleman (ramona.coleman@fwcs.k12.in.us) is manager of professional learning, and C. Todd Cummings (C.Todd.Cummings@fwcs.k12.in.us) is project director for strategic initiatives at Fort Wayne Community Schools in Fort Wayne, Indiana. ■

Solution Tree

T H E

S U M M I T

MARCH 4–6, 2015
PHOENIX, ARIZONA

"We brought a TEAM OF 22, all of whom came away ENERGIZED and EMPOWERED with a vision of the PLC process and the research to back it up."

—James Sheldahl, associate superintendent,
Yuma Union High School District #70, Arizona

PLC
AT WORK™

Register today!
solution-tree.com/2015PLCSummit
#atplc

Go online for speaker bios, event reviews,
and exclusive hotel discounts!

PROTOCOL FOR ESTABLISHING

A THEORY OF CHANGE

tool

PURPOSE:

To develop leaders' skills in establishing an effective theory of change to achieve goals established by their learning community. When working through a theory of change, team members consider barriers that they will face when working toward full implementation of innovations to achieve their goals.

STEPS:

1. State the team's expectations: Team members will establish a theory of change to achieve the goals they have set as an organization. Team members will develop a clear theory of change before making decisions about the actions they will take to achieve their goals.

2. Explain that a theory of change clarifies all building blocks required to achieve a long-term goal. This set of connected building blocks establishes a path to success.

3. Ask participants to work in small teams to answer each of the questions on p. 24. Note: If team members require additional research before the questions can be answered effectively, ask them to conduct their research and come prepared to share.

4. Consider the questions one at a time. Once each participant has answered the first question, ask each small team to come to agreement.

5. Ask each team to share results with the whole group.

6. Find common ideas and come to consensus as a whole group.

7. Then answer the second question in the same way and proceed until all questions are answered.

8. Ask each team member to reflect on his or her work, share it with the larger community, and make revisions in the answers based on the best thinking of everyone.

9. Use the theory of change to establish a clearly articulated plan of action.

10. Implement the plan and reflect on the progress regularly.

WHO'S COACHING YOUR COACHES?

When instructional coaches receive the support they need to be effective and efficient, they have a profound, positive impact on teaching and learning. Participants will understand coaching cycle, strengthen communication skills, and utilize a partnership approach. Participants will also learn leadership skills that will encourage school-wide reform, build consistency, and spread ideas across schools.

Format
- 1-to 3-day workshop with a Corwin-Certified Consultant

Audience
- Coaches
- School administrators & leadership teams
- Teacher leaders

Attendees Will Learn How To
- Understand effective instructional coaching techniques
- Build healthy relationships and foster commitment through instructional coaching
- Efficiently conduct classroom observation, teacher enrollment, debriefing, and modeling

*Jim Knight is available as a keynote speaker. Contact your account manager for more information.

Schedule your workshop today!

Call 800-831-6640 to start your instructional coaching journey!

Instructional Coaching Workshops

Developed by Jim Knight

Facilitated by a Corwin-Certified Consultant

CORWIN
A SAGE Company

Answer each question individually, then work as a team to come to consensus about the answers.

1 What is the current situation that we intend to impact?

2 What will it look like when we achieve the desired results we set for ourselves earlier today?

3 What do we need to do to achieve that?

4 What behaviors need to change for that outcome to be achieved?

5 What knowledge or skills do people need before the behavior will change?

6 What resources will be needed to achieve our results?

7 How will we know we are achieving the goals that we have set for ourselves?

By teachers, for teachers

Share My Lesson is a place where educators can come together to create and share their very best teaching resources. Developed by teachers, for teachers, this free platform gives access to high-quality teaching resources and provides an online community where teachers can collaborate with, encourage and inspire each other.

- Free access to nearly 300,000 high-quality teaching resources.

- Dedicated Common Core State Standards information center with resources aligned to the standards.

- Online community forums where teachers can gather advice and collaborate with colleagues.

sharemylesson

aft
A Union of Professionals

tesconnect

www.sharemylesson.com

WISDOM
from the

FACTORY FLOOR

FOR BEST RESULTS, LIMIT INITIATIVES, BUILD CAPACITY, AND MONITOR PROGRESS

By Chad Dumas and Craig Kautz

Imagine you are on a tour of an assembly line factory that makes air conditioners for large vehicles. Assembly line workers wearing hard hats, safety goggles, and ear protection are arranged in "pods" (similar responsibility teams): one for welding, another for electrical components, yet another for painting. Dozens of pods fill the immense factory floor, and each area has a designated time for completing its assigned tasks.

During the tour, the manager-turned-tour-guide emphasizes a process of continuous improvement. This process, basically the plan, do, study, act process from Deming (1986), catches you off guard. As a thought leader and worker, you are surprised to find such a process in a place characterized as routine and repetitive. You ask about the company's improvement processes, how it measures improvement, and how it engages workers in improvement.

Finally, the manager says: "Don't tell our workers, but they really don't need us in order for them to do their job. Our job, as managers, is to build their capacity to make the needed improvements on their own."

This is a true story, told here to emphasize that the job of management — whether at an assembly line factory or in the central office of a school district — is to build capacity.

FOCUS, BUILD, AND CHECK

Focus, build, and check: These are the leadership priorities of a central office working to establish a professional learning community culture — a culture of continuous improvement.

DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many (2010) state that the central office has three key tasks in leading professional learning communities: Limit initiatives, build capacity, and monitor progress. In other words, focus, build, and check.

That's what is happening in the Hastings (Nebraska) Public Schools, where two of the eight schools have been identified as national models of educational effectiveness. In seven of eight buildings, in just four years, student test scores have increased from around 60% proficiency to around 80% proficiency or better.

FOCUS

Limiting initiatives, rather than pursuing the most recent innovation, is an important task for the central office. Central office leaders must show restraint and insist on focused efforts.

At Hastings, central office leaders emphasize three key principles and four critical questions, based on DuFour et al. (2010). Those principles are: a focus on learning, staff working collaboratively, and using results to improve both student learning and instructional practice.

The critical questions are:

1. What do we want students to know and do?
2. How will we assess what students know and do?
3. What will we do for students who don't yet know what we want them to know and do?
4. What will we do for students who do know and can do and need to move on to more advanced learning?

Any innovation must fall within those three principles or help district leaders answer one or more of the four critical questions.

Hastings leaders reduced their efforts on a number of initiatives. A few years ago, the district gave a norm-referenced test three times a year in almost every grade level. Now, the district requires the test in select grade levels just once a year, choosing instead to focus on formative assessment practices and professional learning community processes.

Another initiative that has been reduced is the practice of double-scoring. In the past, every student paper in district writing — done in fall and spring in grades 3-11—was double-scored for reliability. Now, all papers are scored once, then a random sample of papers are double-scored to ensure reliability.

Further, more emphasis is placed on anchor papers. The result is that student writing is scored in half the time, the scores are more reliable because staff aren't exhausted from

> **Sample agenda for learning team meeting, pp. 32-34.**

reading hundreds of papers, and the focus can be directed toward using data from the assessments to improve instruction.

There are more examples of limited initiatives — new intervention programs, the latest computer programs, professional development speakers, and other programs. These initiatives don't get beyond central office leaders' desks because they choose to focus.

BUILD AND CHECK

Building and checking involve joint responsibility for learning and mutual accountability for action.

Building capacity and monitoring progress go hand-in-hand. Monitoring progress of implementation without building capacity is like expecting performance without providing the needed learning for implementation.

In Hastings Public Schools, the common language is what the district calls the learning cycle: Assess, instruct, assess, and reflect. Through the learning cycle, all work focuses on either assessment literacy or instructional practices, conducted in the context of professional learning communities.

The district uses four main activities aligned with the district's focus on building capacity for assessment literacy and professional learning community implementation: monthly administrative learning team meetings, classroom walk-throughs with central office staff and each other, leadership trainings, and school improvement leadership days.

ADMINISTRATIVE LEARNING TEAM

Twice a month, all district administrators convene. One meeting is devoted to purely management items. The second is the learning team meeting. The separation allows district leaders to focus their professional learning as leaders in the district.

Learning team meetings last about three hours. (See sample agenda and notes on pp. 32-34.) Meetings employ a mix of structures adapted from Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011) and best instructional practice. For example, the whole group may hear a short talk about insights into the learning for the day. Every meeting dedicates significant time to small-group learning. There are also sections devoted to coaching.

During small-group learning, principals are grouped, together with central office staff, to engage in tasks such as debriefing from prereading, engaging in a specific activity, and reviewing evidence of implementation of the learning cycle from staff in their buildings.

The expectation in the Hastings Public Schools is that every teacher formally documents his or her engagement in the learning cycle, providing evidence of preassessing, instruction, post-assessing, and reflecting on what did or didn't work based on evidence of student learning.

Building principals guide staff through the learning cycle. Every month at the administrative learning team meeting, they

HASTINGS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Student results on Nebraska's state reading and math tests 2010-14

The results of improvement efforts in Hastings Public Schools, as measured by state test scores, show strong and steady gains in student reading and math scores.

Grade	Reading			Math		
	2010	2014	Change	2011	2014	Change
Grades 3-8 average	60	78	+18	65	74	+9
3	59	81	+22	64	78	+14
4	60	84	+24	71	84	+13
5	55	79	+24	78	79	+1
6	62	77	+15	72	71	-1
7	62	80	+18	60	73	+13
8	62	80	+18	66	77	+11
11	61	58	-3	44	48	+4

In 2010, the average percent of students proficient in Hastings Public Schools was eight percentage points below the state average. In 2014, the average percent of students proficient was above the state average. This has been accomplished with almost 60% of students in poverty, compared to the state average of 44%.

Source: Hastings Public Schools.

bring evidence of staff's implementation of the learning cycle. This serves two purposes: Principals see what teaching staffs are doing in their own and others' buildings, and they hold each other mutually accountable for doing the work.

The learning team meeting includes time for coaching so that principals can learn to give effective feedback to their staff. Role-playing is key to this process as principals and central office staff engage in mock conversations about the evidence of professional learning provided by learning teams in their building. The principal is then able to practice using coaching skills that are useful when working directly with staff.

CLASSROOM WALK-THROUGHS

Workshops, trainings, and events will make no difference in student learning if there isn't a change of practice in the classroom. Hence, classroom walk-throughs are critical to building staff capacity and monitoring implementation of effective practice.

The district's director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment began conducting walk-throughs throughout the roughly 300 classrooms in 2010-11. The goals of the walk-throughs are to build a common language of instruction, understand the

Raise Your Hand for Student Success

The National Education Association's 3 million members are deeply committed to student success and improving the quality of teaching. That's why NEA is proud to sponsor the 2014 Learning Forward Annual Conference. When we all work together, the profession grows stronger, teachers are better supported, and our students are prepared to succeed in life and in a global economy.

Visit nea.org/RaiseYourHand to learn more and get involved.

nea.org/raiseyourhand

Raise YOUR Hand

nea
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
nea.org

Great Public Schools for Every Student

implementation of instructional strategies in classrooms, and build the capacity of principals to have productive coaching conversations with teachers.

The following year, building principals joined the walk-throughs. And in 2012-13, principals doing exceptional work with specific strategies were paired with principals facing challenges with those strategies. In 2013-14, some building principals brought teachers along on the walk-throughs.

The district, in collaboration with building principals, developed a feedback form based on Design Questions 1 and 5 from Marzano's *The Art and Science of Teaching* (2007). Teachers received a copy, but neither the central office nor the building principal kept copies.

LEADERSHIP WORKSHOPS

Workshops are one very limited action that the district takes to build the capacity of principals and other designated leaders. These workshops are focused on district leaders (principals and school improvement leaders in the building) only and are not open to the entire staff.

For example, when first implementing Design Questions 1 and 5, the district brought in author Jim Knight for two days to assist in providing feedback to staff. In 2013-14, the district brought in education consultant Lee Jenkins to help leaders understand how to use his LtoJ tool for setting expectations, monitoring progress, and celebrating success.

These limited workshops focus on building leaders' understanding to move forward with implementation after the workshop.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT LEADERSHIP DAYS

One of the longest-standing and more consistent philosophies of school reform is Larry Lezotte's (2005) Correlates of Effective Schools. Lezotte's first correlate is instructional leadership. A key aspect of this is the need for a core leadership group whose responsibility is "to initiate and sustain an ongoing conversation of school change based on the Effective Schools research" (Lezotte, 2005, p. 183).

Hastings Public Schools cultivates core leadership groups in every building by hosting school improvement leadership days. These are three separate days during the school year — typically in September, December, and February — where school improvement leaders from each building come together for the day.

Led by the district's director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, building principals and their school improvement chairs gather in a central location. The district provides substitute teachers for classroom teachers who chair the school improvement committees in their building.

The morning of each session focuses on new content that school improvement leaders need to consider in implementing their action plans. In 2010-11, content for the school improvement leadership days focused on data literacy, data analysis, and

the content of a building profile.

In 2011-12, the morning session of school improvement leadership days focused on the study and implementation of the breakthrough model of school improvement. This included researching best practices, clarifying interventions, and developing district and building action plans.

The next two years, the district focused on an in-depth study of Learning Forward's Innovation Configuration maps (Learning Forward, 2012) for the Standards for Professional Learning — specifically, those concerning the roles of principals and leadership teams.

During the afternoon portion of school improvement leadership days, participants work in their teams. The focus is on implementing the learning from the morning, revising building action plans, and planning specific next steps.

FOCUS, BUILD, AND CHECK

District leaders realize that while they can lead change, they can't manage it (Fullan, 2001).

Instead of trying to control change, Hastings' central office staff creates the conditions for change to occur: They focus their efforts. They build the capacity of the people in the district to make change happen. And they monitor the implementation of learning throughout the district.

REFERENCES

Deming, W.E. (1986). *Out of the crisis.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T. (2010). *Learning by doing: A handbook for professional learning communities* (2nd ed.). Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lambert, L. (1998). *Building leadership capacity in schools.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

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

Learning Forward. (2012). *Standards into practice: School-based roles. Innovation Configuration maps for Standards for Professional Learning.* Oxford, OH: Author.

Lezotte, L. (2005). More effective schools: Professional learning communities in action. In R. DuFour, R. Eaker, & R. DuFour (Eds.), *On common ground: The power of professional learning communities.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Marzano, R.J. (2007). *The art and science of teaching: A comprehensive framework for effective instruction.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

•

Chad Dumas (cdumas@esu9.org) is director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment and Craig Kautz (ckautz@esu9.org) is superintendent of schools for Hastings Public Schools in Hastings, Nebraska. ■

Amplify is proud to sponsor the Learning Forward Conference.

Engaging. Relevant. Personal.

Introducing: Professional Learning Maps

In a hands-on workshop learn how we can help you focus PD on the right skills, right now.

RESERVE YOUR SPOT NOW FOR OUR LIVE SESSION AT AMPLIFY.COM/LF.

(Seating is limited, and is available on a first-come, first served basis.)

Monday, December 8, 5p.m. and 5:30p.m.

Amplify.

ADMINISTRATIVE LEARNING TEAM *AGENDA*

Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2013	District office conference room	8:45 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

BEFORE THE MEETING, PLEASE:

1. Read pp. 132-153 of *Learning by Doing* (2nd ed.) — note Knowledge Map Key Concepts as you read.

2. Bring the interview questions that you use when interviewing teachers for position(s) in your building.

3. Bring evidence of the implementation of the learning cycle and SMART goal(s).

FOCUS ON COMPETENCY 3: The leader understands the necessity of clear academic achievement standards, aligned classroom-level achievement targets, and their relationship to the development of accurate assessments.

Estimated time	Topic	Facilitator(s)	Desired outcome
5 minutes	Gathering	All	Initiation of meeting
5 minutes	Last time's quiz data	Chad	Review/preview
5 minutes	Divide into groups: Craig, Tamisha, David (F), Cathy, Montessa, Jay, Donna (F), Beth, Jason, Chad, Lawrence, Amy (F)	Chad	Preparation
30 minutes	*Learning by Doing*, pp. 132-153 What key concepts are in this section? Where are they found? What ahas did you have?	Facilitators	Shared understanding
30 minutes	Assessment FOR Learning Activity 13	Facilitators	Shared understanding
30 minutes	Assessment FOR Learning Activity 13 debrief	Chad	Future action steps
30 minutes	Learning cycle show-and-tell Modeling conversations with staff	Facilitators	Mutual accountability
20 minutes	Gallup hope	Chad	Shared understanding

NORMS: Be prepared, be on topic, be respectful, honor consensus.

Source: Hastings Public Schools.

New & Notable from Jossey-Bass

ADMINISTRATIVE LEARNING TEAM *NOTES*   Dec. 17, 2013

Assessment FOR Learning Activity 13 (p. 170)

Great questions already:

Great questions to add:

Learning cycle show-and-tell observations

Pause

Prompt

Paraphrase

Rapport

Hope article (tinyurl.com/hpshope):

Four things that "squared" with me:

1.
2.
3.
4.

Three things that I will "try-angle":

1.
2.
3.

Question(s) that is/are still "circling" around in my head:

Source: Hastings Public Schools.

PARTNERS *in* ACHIEVEMENT

SYNERGY FUELS GROWTH IN LITERACY AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

By Wendy James, Dave Derksen, and Kerry Alcorn

About a decade ago, Saskatoon Public Schools — the largest in district Canada's province of Saskatchewan — typified all districts in the province.

Though the nature of the work shared between central office and the district's 50-plus schools was professionally harmonious and positive, that work did not always align or focus ultimately on improving student learning.

Professional development was sometimes fragmented and transitory. Given the dearth of standardized measures of student achievement, the province undertook few — if any — checks on student level progress.

The role of central office was to emphasize a consistent administrative approach to managing schools. Central office was a space where professional territory was clearly defined. Each person managed a discrete area of emphasis, such as technology, instruction, or assessment. The work of each department was neither inherently competitive nor collaborative relative to another.

MODELING COLLABORATION

Saskatoon Public Schools made the decision 10 years ago to undertake major changes in how it supports professional learning. The district began with two major priorities: increasing literacy in elementary schools and transforming high schools to increase student engagement.

The district appointed a facilitator for each priority in central office, and thus began a process of building new structures and processes for professional learning.

To bring tighter focus to improving student learning, the district undertook two key strategies to enhance instructional leadership. The first was to construct the Leadership for Learning framework (see graphic on p. 37). The

LEADERSHIP
FOR LEARNING

CULTURES

VISION

Communicating

Monitoring

Sharing leadership: Building strong teams

Setting and living priorities: Focused resolute action

Improving students' learning and achievement

Aligning

Ensuring expected practice: Participating in curriculum, instruction, and assessment

Leading and engaging in learning: Stimulating inquiry

RELATIONSHIPS

Managing

BELIEFS

Source: Saskatoon Public Schools.

second was to revise existing practices for assessing teachers, moving to a somewhat localized version of Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching, known in the district as Assessment for Teaching.

The end goal of both strategies is to improve student achievement and engagement through developing instructional leadership across the district. Related changes soon followed.

EXPLICIT MODELING

Leadership meetings — that occasion when central office leaders collaborate with in-school administrators — have come to reflect the change district leaders most wish

to see in classrooms. This entails shifting from a focus on administrative and management tasks, with an agenda set by central office, to one that emphasizes learning and instructional leadership.

The agenda is now built in a collaborative environment representing a districtwide cross section of instructional leaders. Leadership development remains a central tenet to the process, and is part of the Leadership for Learning framework.

EXPANDING TRUST

The district has intentionally pursued greater collaboration between central office and schools, characterized by

shared leadership of professional learning. The impetus for this approach was a change in district leaders' beliefs about the role of school-based professionals within professional development.

Specifically, the district now understands that those closest to instruction are most responsible for success in any initiative. When district leaders realized that the goal was to co-own responsibility for professional learning, rather than to direct or control processes and outcomes centrally, schools and central office became partners in learning improvement.

As partners, school and central office staff now play complementary roles that are equally valuable and distinct. All involved acknowledge that co-constructed learning goals can only be accomplished if they collaborate.

COHERENCE AND SIMPLICITY

Research confirms that it takes nearly 50 hours of professional learning to realize any substantive change in teacher instructional practice (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). One of the first tasks of central office, therefore, is to reduce the number of new instructional behaviors expected from teachers.

Over the last two years, central office leaders in the two district priorities, curriculum and instruction, First Nations education, assessment, and staff development have integrated all work toward achieving a singular vision and goal for a school year — one focusing on specific teacher behaviors highly correlated with improved student achievement.

By focusing the district's efforts, central office provides coherence by reducing the competing priorities facing schools. Without this coherence, professional learning cannot yield improved results for students. This same simplicity and coherence is reflected within the district's leadership development.

CRITERIA FOR LEADERSHIP

In 2010, the district's senior leaders recognized the need for clear criteria for effective leadership. To address this need, top-level district leaders initiated a process to develop a vision of effective leadership in the schools and district.

More than 20 school-based administrators volunteered for the project. The process, which included extensive investigation into effective leadership practices, yielded a co-constructed vision for effective leadership called the Saskatoon Public Schools' Leadership for Learning framework.

Developing the framework collaboratively created an overwhelming commitment to realize its vision. The framework carried the stamp of approval of those administrators who helped create and promote its value. Their contributions increased the quality of the leadership concepts and competencies in the framework, and their voices were clearly reflected in the final product.

This collaboration created a much deeper sense of ownership for the framework than was possible had it been developed by central office leaders, then simply presented to other leaders for implementation.

The strong sense of shared ownership was evident when 20% of in-school administrators volunteered to support their peers in using the framework and plan the work. Nearly 80% of the planning committee then led a learning session for their peers last year. Because of the common sense of ownership, the framework became the plan for building and celebrating instructional leadership in all leaders.

Harold Robertson, an elementary principal and member of the committee, described the value of being deeply involved in sharing the work: "For me, the value in being part of the development team was the grass-roots development of our model and being part of the research, the stories, and the discussions, that supported what we valued as leaders within our division.

"We all make our own meaning of what we read, hear, or are presented. In this model, we were able to have meaningful discussions in small and large groups that allowed us to better understand each other and share our meaning. The buy-in amongst our group was huge.

"I recall presenting our work to the larger leadership group on two occasions and thinking: It would have been great if all of you were at the meeting when this point was discussed/debated/developed," said Robertson.

The Leadership for Learning framework articulates the organizational structure and focus for all leadership learning in the district. Leadership groups constantly review the contents and interpretations within the framework, which refreshes and invigorates the district's ongoing leadership development.

All processes and content respond to the framework and are planned for — and facilitated collaboratively by — school-based administrators and central office staff. This group is convened, but not controlled, by central office leaders.

The ongoing effect on all leaders is a deep commitment to using their day-to-day leadership actions in schools to realize the clear, common vision described in the framework.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING GOALS 2013-14

VISION: Student learning will improve because teachers know where students are right now and choose purposefully what to do next instructionally to respond.

THIS YEAR:
- Teachers use a growing range of formative assessments to determine where students are now.
- Teachers learn an increasing number of research-based instructional interventions/strategies and try some based on student need.
- Teachers talk with peers about trying those strategies and discuss evidence of impact.

Administrators support one another in devoting more time to instructional improvements that make a difference for student learning. Administrators decided to work together in groups of critical friends to discuss instructional needs and, in addition, administrative teams in schools started weekly or monthly learning walks to view the progress of instruction.

Teachers receive more and better instructional guidance in the form of clearer expectations, more feedback and coaching, and more effective professional learning, through processes such as collaborative learning communities. This increased support is yielding consistently higher-quality classroom instruction and better learning outcomes for students.

For example, the division prioritizes literacy, and last year saw a 4% increase in Grade 2 students who read near, at, or above grade level using the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Reading Assessment. Both Grades 2 and 3 see 75% near, at, or above grade level in reading. In high schools, where the focus is student engagement, the percentage of students reporting high levels of engagement is now 13% above the national norm.

The district used a somewhat identical process to implement Danielson's Framework for Teaching last year. Just as the district has narrowed the focus for teachers, so, too, has the skill of district administrators been sharpened toward instructional leadership. It now takes center stage at all leadership meetings. At least one hour of the biweekly half-day administrator meetings is dedicated to learning about and practicing the skills of observing teachers.

All district leaders have enhanced their capacity in collecting sound evidence of instruction. As a result, inter-rater reliability among our in-school and central office leaders continues to improve. On five occasions last year, administrators and central office staff worked through practice videos together and compared results.

By September 2014, 94% of administrators and central office leaders who completed an online course in the Danielson framework were rated as proficient. Furthermore, 92% of all administrators attempting the assessment were proficient on the first attempt.

Students, teachers, and administrators benefit from the deliberate intent of central office leaders to act in partnership with school-based staff. Because principals and vice principals are pivotal within each framework, each framework found instant legitimacy in the hearts and minds of all in-school administrators. This manifested itself in the location of greatest import — the school.

As a result of these collaborative processes, district culture is now characterized by mutual respect between schools and central office and by a fundamental regard for the quality and professionalism of teachers and administrators in schools and at central office. Principals and school-based leaders describe a synergistic relationship at the heart of school-based professional learning.

"The one example that stands out for me is our April staff professional learning, where we reflected on our year's work with a Wordle from our student survey responses, then moved into a classify/categorize instructional strategies activity," says high school principal Tammy Girolami. "I was able to set the stage, make it real for our school with real student examples.

"What the central office team member brought to the conversation was the capacity to show us why a particular process is, or is not, a certain strategy, and why one [strategy] is better than another, supported with statistics and relevant research."

EXPLICITLY GROWING SKILLS

Central office has played a critical role in helping leaders comprehend and assess the skills and understandings essential for pursuing the collective focus. Formative assessment, in its various forms, remains a key target in professional learning.

Initially, central office helped build leaders' understanding of formative assessment and its impact. External experts, such as Dylan Wiliam, came to the district through central office budgets.

Formative assessment practice became embedded in school-based leaders' professional learning. For example, formative assessment continues to be modeled in professional learning. The leaders practice using it to support learning communities, and coaches learn how to use literacy tools formatively.

Central office continues to embed the mindset of formative assessment as the foundation for all activities and documents. It is central to the district's work within its Assessment for Teaching.

Support from central office is essential in helping school-based leaders shift teacher practice. In Saskatoon, consultants and coordinators work directly with school groups such as data teams and learning councils. They also develop materials for schools to use in professional learning that illustrate and promote the use of formative assessment.

Because the process is decentralized but centrally supported, teacher leaders maintain ownership for the processes and outcomes. As such, they are more likely to see central office experts as supporters and providers of needed materials. Tom Sargeant, a high school principal, says, "It is a great team atmosphere with central office because they come into our schools and understand the community, school goals, and the challenges we face to meet the needs of our learners. Their insight and expertise is valued by all staff members, and they truly make a significant contribution at the school level on a regular basis."

As part of the district's ongoing transformation of professional learning, district leaders continue to improve their understanding that the value of any professional learning model is assessed, foremost, by student outcomes. This remains a crucial point of emphasis initiated by central office leaders.

When school leaders collect data to turn in to evidence of student progress, central office becomes the conduit for sharing results, improving data analysis skills, and organizing ongoing

LEARNING
TO BE A
CHANGE
AGENT

**SYSTEM
LEADERS
MASTER
SKILLS TO
ENCOURAGE
BUY-IN FOR
REFORMS**

By Nonie K. Lesaux, Sky H. Marietta, and Emily Phillips Galloway

To keep pace with expectations for student literacy achievement, instructional leaders need professional learning designed with the understanding that individuals in system-level leadership have widely varied professional backgrounds and experiences.

For example, some leaders have deep knowledge of how students learn and corresponding knowledge of classroom practices but may have limited experience with adult learning (e.g. the skills to convey that knowledge to those without it) and effecting change outside of the classroom.

In other cases, a leader may be experienced in reform, skilled in working with adults and designing effective improvement structures, but may lack knowledge of the substance of literacy reform.

Supporting implementation of any reform at scale demands skill in both areas.

In designing professional learning for system-level leaders, two participant roles emerge as key: learners of content and agents of change. As learners, the principles of strong instruction apply. Exposure to content must occur repeatedly, be connected to prior knowledge, and

is most effective when communities of learners work together. As change agents, participants must be able to broker the knowledge they have gained and build buy-in in the larger school community.

One-day, one-size-fits-all professional development workshops remain the most common method for cultivating new knowledge and capacities among educators. However, it's been clear for some time that this model lacks the intensity and multiple opportunities for learning and application known to bring about student improvement.

Although extant research points to the need to transform this approach, few districts have committed the resources — both financial and human — to professional learning that leverages what we know about learning, teaching, and school reform.

What follows is the story of a professional learning initiative that sought to provide the intensity needed to build conceptual and applied knowledge to support district leaders in assuming the role of change agents.

OVERVIEW

As a team with collective expertise in literacy instruction and capacity building among educators, we have designed and led professional learning institutes
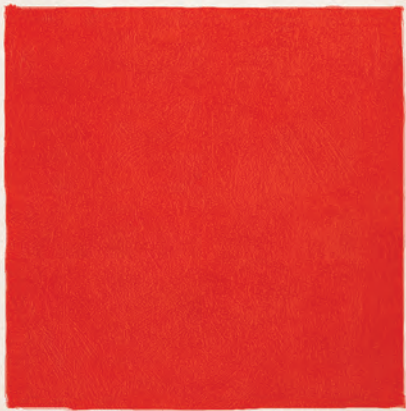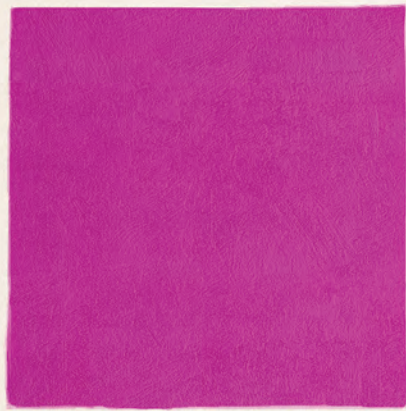
SYSTEM LEADER KNOWLEDGE SHIFTS

	Outset of institute	**End of institute**	**Participant reflections**
Populations included in response to intervention	Response to intervention is for struggling students only.	All students participate in response to intervention through daily instruction, and some receive supplemental instruction and intervention.	"Now I know that (classroom instruction) is about good instructional strategies for all students." "Thinking about response to intervention as really a way to improve ... instruction to help all students overall."
Increasingly complex conceptualizations of response to intervention	Response to intervention is special education renamed and is a mechanism to support struggling students.	Response to intervention is a schoolwide system to identify instructional targets, improve daily instruction, and inform intervention groupings and strategies.	"All teachers are response to intervention teachers."
Assessments	Any assessment can be used to screen students for literacy risk.	Screening assessments, which assess code-based and meaning-based skills separately, are uniquely suited to surface literacy difficulties and play a vital role in response to intervention.	"Understanding the purpose of assessments is crucial."
Implementation	Response to intervention is a system that can be quickly implemented with minimal time investment.	Response to intervention needs to be carefully organized and professional learning provided over an extended period of time.	"Ongoing improvement is not the work of one, but many. Multilevel collaboration is important."

for system-level leaders whose task is to support school-based literacy improvement in one of the largest school districts in the U.S.

Our goals were to create professional learning that simultaneously builds participants' knowledge about the content of the literacy-based reform (leader as learner) and participants' knowledge leading and supporting implementation (leader as change agent). To accomplish the latter, we ask participating leaders to select partner schools in the district to serve as a field site to apply the knowledge gained in the institute.

We design the institutes much like a university course, drawing on the principles of effective adult learning communities. Ultimately, a community of practice forms through interactive, hands-on, and discussion-based sessions. Participants receive resources to support the full-day sessions and their learning outside of the face-to-face meetings. These include:
- Course syllabus;
- Slides from each session;
- A companion document for each session with more information on the content presented;

- A course book for reference;
- Webinars on key topics that include a presentation to be used in school-based work; and
- Email contact with institute facilitators as needed.

CASE EXAMPLE

We developed an institute to support system-level leaders on the design and implementation of a response to intervention model in schools serving high-needs populations of English language learners in high-poverty neighborhoods. Response to intervention is an approach that makes use of universal screening to guide the design of both high-quality classroom instruction for all students and supplemental supports for students at risk for reading difficulty.

For these schools, response to intervention holds real promise for developing students' advanced literacy skills and yet will, in many cases, require significant shifts in how schools and teachers approach literacy instruction. The 11-day, 60-hour professional learning institute progressively built participants' knowledge about response to intervention and effective literacy reform.

KEY DATA COMPETENCIES TO LEAD RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

Strategist	Leader
Identify key problem areas and develop an associated action plan that promotes teacher knowledge and builds best practices for literacy instruction.	Understand the social, political, and cultural dynamics of decision making and improvement processes and connect school staff with key resources to promote buy-in.
Analyst	**Designer**
Apply a repertoire of data-analytic strategies to identify patterns in data and sources of student difficulty.	Develop an efficient and comprehensive assessment battery that allows school staff to understand student skills in key domains over time.

Between sessions, participants led the work of implementing response to intervention at their partner schools. Often, leaders are expected to implement reforms at scale with little experience in doing so. These school partnerships gave leaders practice negotiating the realities of applying conceptual knowledge of response to intervention in school contexts where the leadership structure, the specific characteristics of the student population, and the existing curriculum and practices, among other factors, did not allow for simple implementation.

Three specific goals guided the institute:

- Develop participants' knowledge about the content of the literacy reform;
- Equip participants with the skills to cultivate communities of practice in their own school-based work; and
- Foster participants' identity as change agent.

1. Develop participants' knowledge about the content of the literacy reform.

The challenge this institute sought to address — implementing high-impact literacy instruction in schools with high numbers of at-risk learners — is vast and somewhat complex. If participants were to become agents of reform, they had to first understand ELL students' literacy development.

This is a population that is particularly vulnerable to school failure. Many ELLs are long-term ELLs — students who never develop sufficient English proficiency to access the mainstream curriculum independently — and, as a population, ELLs are referred to and inappropriately identified for special education services at much higher rates than their non-ELL peers.

At the same time, participants needed to understand the potential for response to intervention to support these readers. When the institute began, most participants had only a basic understanding of response to intervention and saw it as a special education model, rather than a school-based model of prevention and targeted instruction tailored to students' needs.

Four areas of conceptual shifts surfaced in participants' written reflections on key learnings gained during the institute.

1. Participants came to view response to intervention as a schoolwide system designed to support literacy development of all students, including those reading at or above grade level — not just as a system for struggling readers.
2. Participants' understanding of response to intervention shifted from viewing it as a special education model to one designed to bolster the level of literacy instruction in every classroom.
3. Participants considered their augmented knowledge of assessment systems to be an important cornerstone of a response to intervention framework.
4. Participants noted that they had abandoned the idea that response to intervention can function as a quick fix and came to view implementation as a multiyear process involving numerous stakeholders. This shift reflects participants' growing awareness of their role as change agents and highlights the importance of developing leaders' knowledge of response to intervention to support their growth as leaders.

2. Equip participants with the skills to cultivate communities of practice in their own school-based work.

While the ultimate goal of our partner district was to ensure strong implementation districtwide, some of the most effective reform starts with a small group — to fine-tune the approach and ensure that it is scalable.

We designed sessions to promote community while simultaneously developing key data competencies to lead response to intervention. (See table above.) We supported all participants to serve as strategists, analysts, leaders, and designers of response to intervention.

A variety of discussion and workshop formats engaged participants in applying the material and in problem solving with each other. Participants came from a variety of roles within the district, and even from different departments. Some specialized in ELLs, others in response to intervention, while still others led teacher evaluation and development.

These different roles allowed deeper collaboration and knowledge building as participants built a sense of how their diverse roles converged around response to intervention. In addition, sessions were designed to model best practices in adult learning. We developed structured discussion protocols and activities that guided participants through the learning process.

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS TRACKER

If you are working with a single school, place a name of a team member in each column. Each person can sign off on completed action steps. If you are following the progress of several school sites, use multiple rows to follow each school individually. Put the name of the school in each column.

PLEASE USE THE CHART TO INDICATE WHICH PORTIONS YOU HAVE COMPLETED IN YOUR WORK WITH YOUR PARTNER SCHOOL(S).

Category	Action step	EXAMPLE: Bay Elementary							
Response to intervention groundwork	Created work plan for school collaboration	6/15							
	Established response to intervention team	9/05							
	Met with response to intervention team to discuss overview of response to intervention	9/22							
Examining assessment systems	Created master list of literacy assessments	10/11							
	Categorized assessments by type	10/22							
	Inventoried instructional time used for testing	10/23							
Data analysis and instructional design	Reviewed literacy data scores	11/5							
	Calculated percentage at risk by literacy skill	11/5							
	Determined instructional priority area	11/7							
Advancing your response to intervention model	Discussed best practices for Tier 1 literacy instruction	12/13							
	Identified priority area for response to intervention system	1/5							
	Wrote assessment purpose statement	2/7							
	Created action plan for implementation	3/15							

Response to intervention groundwork →
Examining assessment systems →
Data analysis and instructional design →
Advancing your response to intervention model →

During the second half of the institute, participants partnered with one or two K-8 schools to carry out the improvement process at a local site characterized by high numbers of ELLs and in the early stages of implementation. The regular sessions, therefore, served two functions: to build system-level leaders' knowledge about response to intervention and ELLs while also building their capacity to support their schools and associated principals and teachers.

The institute closed with presentations by institute participants, who were often accompanied by some of their school partners. The presentations were made in a case consultation format, where the presenter focused the audience on key aspects of the partner school's plan and sought input and feedback that could move the work forward.

3. Foster participants' identity as change agent.

Beyond building participants' knowledge about response to intervention and tool kit for working with schools, the institute focused on how to bring about change in schools.

Many participants had been communicating compliance-based procedures to their schools. The institute transformed participating leaders into change agents in the literacy reform process, with an eye toward sustained improvements in ELLs' reading outcomes in their partner schools.

An implementation progress tracker supported participants' efforts to lead change. (See table on p. 44.) Webinars allowed participants to review session content and to share what they learned with members of their school teams. Using presentations and other supporting materials, participants led professional learning communities being cultivated at the schools.

In many cases, participants undertook a systematic approach with schools to do this work by:

- Forming a school-based team;
- Holding regular meetings over the course of eight weeks as part of a long-term plan;
- Using case study materials as a platform for knowledge building;
- Using discussion protocols as a basis for dialogue and decision making; and
- Engaging school-based teams in independent work between meetings.

LESSONS LEARNED

We noted four key takeaways to consider when designing professional learning for instructional leaders and educators.

Structure. This initiative confirmed and reinforced what research says about effective professional learning that results in instructional change. Effective professional learning:

- Is sustained — in this case, over six months;
- Centers around a community of practice (system-level leaders);
- Includes multiple modes of delivery (webinars, course material, hands-on, interactive work, discussion);

- Is anchored in context (a partner school site); and
- Provides ongoing opportunities for questioning and reflection.

Deep focus on content knowledge. As educators move up through the system and become instructional leaders, they are increasingly placed in the role of expert on topics and problems about which they have varying degrees of knowledge. For participants in this institute, baseline knowledge about response to intervention was relatively limited and thus capacity to engage schools in the finer details would be limited.

Professional learning must therefore be deep and sustained enough to build participants' content knowledge. Participants need resources that follow a progression for individual learning and can be accessed outside of the classroom.

In this institute, many participants relied heavily on these resources and reported greater understanding and confidence in working with schools on their response-to-intervention process. The resources included:

- Webinars;
- Modules with professional learning community exercises;
- Companion book, written for practitioners; and
- Case-based materials for use with partner schools.

Situating the work within the reform landscape. If any new initiative is to be effective, instructional leaders and educators must understand the ways in which it relates to and will bolster other improvement efforts. To accomplish this, the professional learning community analyzed the relationship between response to intervention and other reform movements in the district, including Common Core State Standards.

In addition to building their knowledge about response to intervention, participants highlighted this aspect of the institute work as crucial to their own learning and success.

CREATE KNOWLEDGE

Just as careful instruction is required to improve student outcomes, instructional leaders need time and a safe learning environment in order to hone their craft.

Immersing key instructional leaders in interactive and transferable professional learning creates the knowledge base necessary to enact complex policy changes. Successful professional learning in today's reform landscape requires that participants be regarded simultaneously as content learners and as change agents.

•

Nonie K. Lesaux (nonie_lesaux@gse.harvard.edu) is a professor, Sky H. Marietta (sky_marietta@gse.harvard.edu) is a post-doctoral fellow, and Emily Phillips Galloway (ecp450@mail.harvard.edu) is a doctoral candidate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in Cambridge, Massachusetts. ■

BEYOND BUSES, BOILERS, AND BOOKS

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT TAKES CENTER STAGE FOR PRINCIPAL SUPERVISORS

By Sarosh Syed

On a steamy morning in July, about 200 educators from around the country pored over model algebra and English lesson plans at the Relay Graduate School of Education's 12-day summer intensive program for principals in New York City. Their task: to identify why these lesson plans succeed and how principals can replicate them in their schools. The purpose: To allow principals to step away from the pressures of their schools and focus on how they can help students learn.

Participants flipped through bulky white binders, scribbling notes on worksheets or tapping them into laptops. The room was silent, save for an occasional whisper, a cough, or a buzz of a phone reminding its owner of responsibilities at the office.

After 12 minutes of reading and contemplation, participants started throwing out ideas as Relay staff members with wireless microphones raced after raised hands. When people agreed with a statement, they would snap their fingers, a practice that allowed them to signal support without the clattering sound of clapping that could disrupt the flow of the class.

The statement that got the loudest, longest assent came not from one of the principals, however, but a man who supervises them. Antonio Esquibel oversees 10 principals in Denver. If principals want to replicate such lessons in their schools, he suggested, they have to manage their time. Esquibel used to run a school of 2,000 students and 122 teachers, he told the group, and found it impossible to review every teacher's lesson plan. The answer, he said, was to delegate the job to teacher leaders. The sound of eager snapping rolled through the room.

Why would Esquibel, a principal supervisor, need to attend a training session for principals? For school officials in Denver, the answer is that principals are most effective when their supervisors work in sync with them. "We want our principal managers to be able to model best practices in observation, feedback, and coaching with the principals they supervise," said Greta Martinez, assistant superintendent in

Jocelyn Foulke, center, is one of about 200 educators from around the country who participated in a summer intensive program at the Relay Graduate School of Education in New York City last July. Foulke is head of school at Excel Academy Charter School in East Boston, Massachusetts.

Denver Public Schools' Office of Post-Secondary Readiness. "We want our managers to have a deeper understanding of what we want our principals to know and be able to do."

Denver Public Schools, one of 14 districts that receive funding from The Wallace Foundation to improve principal effectiveness, is also one of a number of districts around the country emphasizing the development of principals' managers in the central office. The principal's job has changed over the last decade, going from a role that revolved around "buses, boilers, and books" to one that centers on promoting high-quality teaching and learning in classrooms. But in most districts, the principal supervisor's job hasn't yet adapted to that change.

A Wallace-commissioned study by the Council for the Great City Schools found that principal supervisors are often stretched for time, insufficiently staffed, poorly matched to the needs of their schools, and assigned to too many schools (Corcoran et al., 2013). A Council survey of administrators in 41 large districts found that principal supervisors manage fully 24 principals on average and that

their duties typically extend beyond helping principals. Close to 95% of respondents said their responsibilities included "district administrative issues" while almost 73% put "district compliance issues" among their job tasks (Casserly, Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, & Palacios, 2013).

The unwieldiness of the job as it is often structured can hamper a district's ability to support its principals. "Principal supervisors are the ones that are out in schools, in the field, working with principals," said Tricia McManus, director of leadership development at Hillsborough County Public Schools, the district encompassing Tampa, Fla., and another recipient of Wallace funding. "If we're going to maintain the quality of principals we're putting into that new principal role and continue their support and development, we're going to have to focus on the role that's in the schools the most."

To make sure principals get the instructional support they need, school districts are experimenting with several strategies.

IT STARTS WITH THE JOB DESCRIPTION

As in many districts around the country, until recently principal supervisors in Hillsborough County were largely responsible for evaluating principal performance and providing administrative supports such as help with budgets, communications, and community relations. Evaluations focused more on day-to-day operations than classroom instruction. And instructional support often came from departments operating independently of principal supervisors.

To sharpen its focus on classroom instruction, Hillsborough County has put principal supervisors at the center of all supports for principals, administrative and instructional. Supervisors now oversee principal coaches and coordinate all central office personnel that support principals, from those who help with employee benefits to those who

This article is sponsored by The Wallace Foundation.

work with students with special needs. To give supervisors time to handle their new responsibilities, Hillsborough has freed them from some community relations work.

"If you look at a job description previously and looked at one now and what we're expecting of them, it has shifted dramatically," McManus said.

NEW TRAINING TO MEET NEW NEEDS

Many principal supervisors have to develop the skills they need to support principals. That could mean everything from brushing up on teaching methods to learning best practices for site visits and school walk-throughs. In other words, principal supervisors need the right kind of professional learning to do their newly defined jobs.

Denver's Relay program included a four-day course especially for principal supervisors. It took them through ways in which supervisors could make the most of site visits — how to spot common mistakes in principals' classroom observations, what to look for when walking the halls and evaluating the school's culture, how to budget time not just to observe principals, but also to offer feedback on performance. Trainees watched videos of other supervisors at work, critiqued what they saw, and, for practice, simulated their own school visits.

Relay's approach is to familiarize teachers, principals, and principal supervisors with the basic practices that help children learn so teachers can provide sound instruction, principals can help teachers improve, and principal supervisors can ensure that principals are offering the support teachers need. "You start with what you want to see in classroom instruction," said Lindsay Kruse, lead planner of the school leadership program at the Relay Graduate School of Education, "and then you have to work backwards from there."

Some districts focus training on executive coaching. "What we were hearing from principals was their need for some actionable feedback, not just 'you're doing a really good job,' " said Ann Clark, deputy superintendent of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district, another Wallace grantee. "So we have been providing that coaching training to our principal supervisors to build their capacity to do that."

The district is working with Queens University's McColl School of Business, which provides customized leadership training for professions ranging from financial services to medicine to education. McColl is developing a program in which Charlotte-Mecklenburg's principal supervisors will study the basics of effective management, simulate interactions with principals, and get feedback on their coaching skills from well-regarded leadership experts.

According to Linda Christopherson, executive director of McColl's Executive Leadership Institute, a key part of the curriculum is to help supervisors build principals' abilities, not just solve problems for them. "Supervisors are busy," she said. "The temptation to just give principals the answers is often too

strong. But they have to understand that by asking the questions and waiting for answers, they can expand the capacity of principals to get those answers themselves."

In Prince George's County, Md., another Wallace-supported district, the district's 20 supervisors gather weekly to beef up their mentoring skills. They simulate school environments to learn how to draw information from conversations with principals, identify potential problems, and determine the resources principals need to address those problems.

The goal, according to Sito Narcisse, an associate superintendent in the district, is to help principal supervisors make a transition from a focus on compliance with regulations to a focus on advice and counsel. "We want them to be more of a coach and a thought partner," he said.

MATCHING THE SUPERVISOR TO THE SCHOOL

Training is crucial, but an equally important consideration for districts is to make sure that they make the right match between supervisor and school.

Georgia's Gwinnett County Public Schools, another Wallace grantee, hires as principal supervisors only those who have a record of success as principals in the district. The requirement, according to Gwinnett County leaders, ensures that supervisors already have a firm grounding in best practices of classroom instruction, school leadership, and Gwinnett County's procedures and protocols. But until last year, the district assigned supervisors to schools based on geography. They would oversee all schools in a particular neighborhood, be they elementary, middle, or high schools.

The structure was not ideal for principals, according to Glenn Pethel, assistant superintendent of leadership development at the district, which is located outside of Atlanta. "If I'm an elementary school principal and I have a supervisor with high school experience, I don't want to spend months trying to get them up to speed on what literature circles look like," he said.

Such realizations led the district to reassign its supervisors so they now oversee only the sorts of schools in which they have experience. The new structure, according to Kevin Tashlein, associate superintendent of school improvement and operations at Gwinnett, has enabled supervisors to support principals not just in matters of administration but also in matters of instruction. "The reorganization by level allowed us to really think strategically about school improvement as the focus of the principal supervisor's work," he said.

MANAGING THE WORKLOAD

Even if supervisors perfectly match their schools, they cannot be effective if they have too many schools to oversee. Gwinnett County is a district with 134 schools spread over 437 square miles, but until last year it had just five principal supervisors. Some managed as many as 26 schools, visiting principals as infrequently as three to five times a year.

"One individual attempting to supervise, evaluate, coach, and facilitate that many individuals is almost impossible," said Pethel.

Ann Clark at Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools experienced a similar challenge. Her district had just six supervisors for 180 principals, with each supervisor overseeing between 16 and 40 schools. "There was an inability to physically be present in schools and conduct instructional walk-throughs, or conference with the principals and the school leadership teams at the schools," she said. "We weren't able to provide responsive support to schools."

Both districts are hiring new principal supervisors to lighten each supervisor's load. Others such as Denver hired deputies to split the work. The goal is to ensure that supervisors oversee no more than 10 to 12 schools.

Results of the expansion are still coming in, but Denver, an early entrant into the area, has received some positive feedback. In 2013, principals and central office staff members said the reduced workload had made principal supervisors more readily available and quicker to address principals' needs, according to a written account of the Denver effort (Gill, 2013, pp.5-6).

FOCUS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Principal supervisors don't work in a vacuum. To make sure they are able to provide principals with instructional support, districts may have to re-evaluate policies and procedures beyond the role of the principal supervisor. Some districts are reallocating resources and revising organizational charts to ensure that the energy of principal supervisors is focused squarely on teaching and learning in the classroom.

In Hillsborough County, the new focus on principal supervisors has led to a realization that "the entire system has to shift," according to Tricia McManus. "It started at teacher effectiveness and then up to principal effectiveness and then up to principal supervisors," she said. "And now we're looking at the way we do business at the central office altogether."

REFERENCES

Casserly, M., Lewis, S., Simon, C., Uzzell, R., & Palacios, M. (2013, March). *Principal evaluations and the principal supervisor: Survey results from the Great City Schools.* Washington, DC: Council of the Great City Schools.

Corcoran, A., Casserly, M., Price-Baugh, R., Walston, D., Hall, R., & Simon, C. (2013, October). *Rethinking leadership: The changing role of principal supervisors.* Washington, DC: Council of the Great City Schools.

Gill, J. (2013, December). *Make room for the principal supervisors.* New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation.

•

Sarosh Syed (SSyed@wallacefoundation.org) is a writer for The Wallace Foundation. ■

---

celebrations of progress.

Last year, the district's high schools created an annual report chronicling their progress. The findings demonstrated that when students witnessed formative assessment in three or more classes, they exceeded Canadian norms on effort, sense of belonging, rigor, and intellectual engagement — the most important of outcomes for high school students.

Saskatoon students continue to report intellectual engagement at 13% above national norms, and the direct relationship between formative assessment practices in their classrooms and their level of intellectual engagement is clear.

Because school-based leaders felt strong ownership of both their targets and their results, they view this progress as their own and value the contributions of central office team members in creating a school in which they can all be proud.

Brent Hills, a high school principal, notes: "Over the past few years, what I keep finding myself saying to staff is that the power of the inquiry process is placing professional development where it belongs … in the hands of professional teachers! Inquiry teams share their questions and progress (successes and challenges) with one another often, sparking ideas and creativity. This sharing has led to better learning opportunities for all students."

Ultimately, Saskatoon Public's central office has built, collaboratively, a structure that supports the work of its schools. The central office facilitates planning to clarify goals, helps narrow the focus, marshals evidence of progress, and lays a research foundation for district leadership and teaching practices.

In helping create this structure, central office leaders learned that the work is best achieved cooperatively. The entire learning community has worked together to raise the work inside schools, where professional learning lives.

REFERENCE

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

•

Wendy James (jamesl@spsd.sk.ca) is coordinator for curriculum and instruction, Dave Derksen (derksend@ spsd.sk.ca) is coordinator for staff development, and Kerry Alcorn (alcornk@spsd.sk.ca) is coordinator for student assessment and evaluation for Saskatoon Public Schools in Saskatchewan, Canada. ■
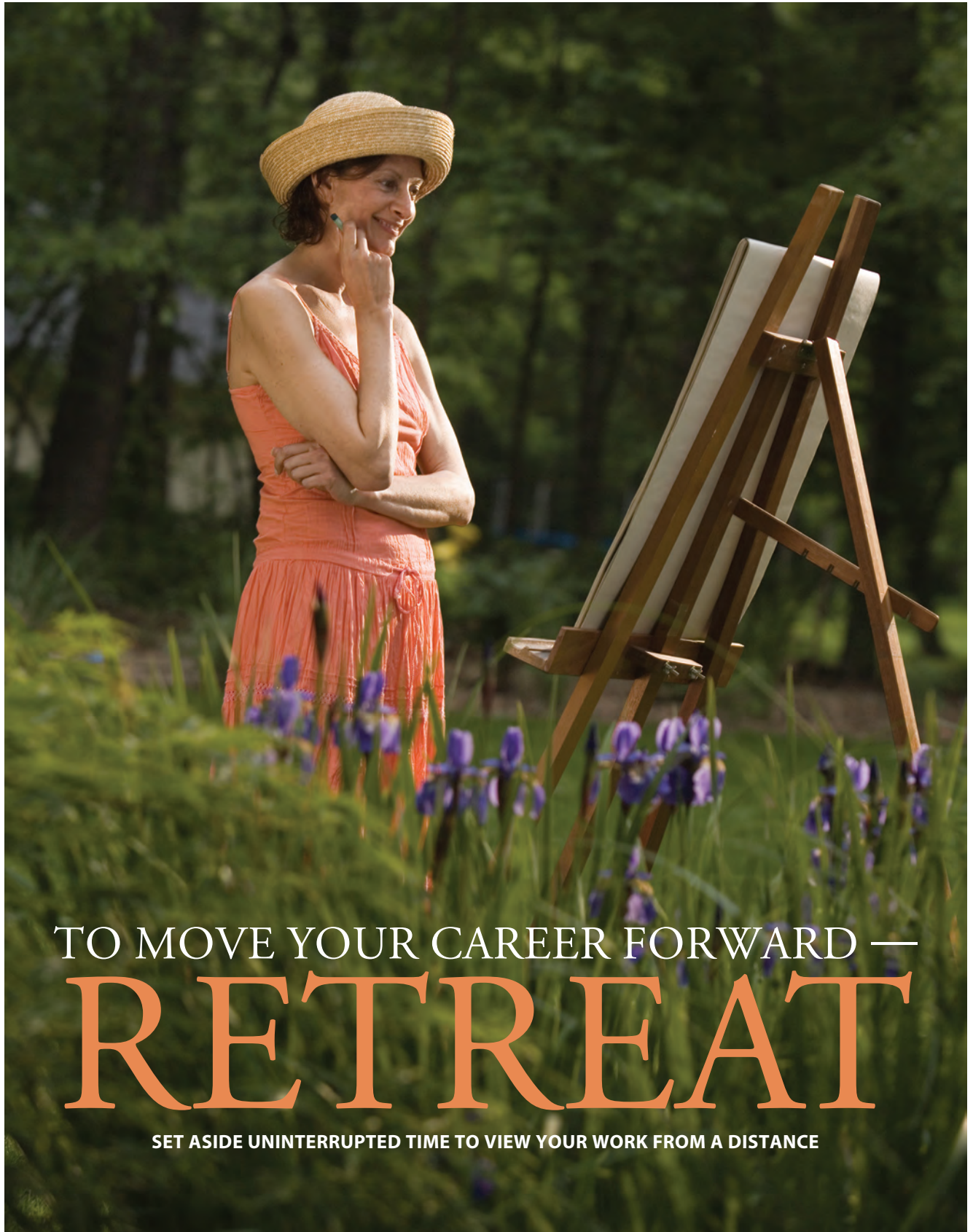
TO MOVE YOUR CAREER FORWARD —
RETREAT

SET ASIDE UNINTERRUPTED TIME TO VIEW YOUR WORK FROM A DISTANCE

By Billie F. Birnie

Maria Cristina Lopez loved her work as a central office coordinator in mathematics, but she realized that she needed to learn more about how to coach effectively. With her supervisor's encouragement, she "apprenticed" herself to the best coach in the district — a coordinator of social studies.

It wasn't long before the classroom teachers she worked with were benefiting from her newly gained insight and guidance. Eager to pass the torch, she shared what she had learned with other coordinators in her office, and math teachers throughout the district improved their practice as a result of the coaching they received from Lopez and her colleagues.

David Graham enjoyed his work in the central office, too. Through careful deliberation, he recognized that, knowledgeable as he was in his subject, he often found himself unable to convey that knowledge effectively. Both his speaking and writing needed attention.

He bought, read, and studied books on effective speaking and writing; he practiced diligently what he learned; and he took advantage of every opportunity that came his way to speak in public and to write for publication. His efforts paid off: He became an accomplished speaker and writer, and he was promoted once, twice, a third time. He finished his career as a successful and satisfied assistant superintendent.

Like Lopez and Graham, no matter what position you hold, you will be more effective and keep your career on track if you step back occasionally to take stock.

It is all too easy in the fast-paced life of the central office to lose sight of things that really matter. Meeting after meet-

---

BOOKS TO IMPROVE SPEAKING AND WRITING

Carnegie, D. (1990). *The quick and easy way to effective speaking.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Elbow, P. (1981). *Writing with power: Techniques for mastering the writing process.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Safire, W. (1992). *Lend me your ears: Great speeches in history.* New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co.

Strunk Jr., W. & White, E.B. (2005). *The elements of style.* New York, NY: Penguin Press.

---

ing, deadlines looming, school needs pressing, telephone calls, memos, emails — all take their toll on energy and perspective. That's why every staff member needs to schedule personal retreats.

GAIN PERSPECTIVE

I learned early the value of perspective. My grandmother was an artist, and, as a child, I frequently watched as she painted, standing at her easel with the north light streaming through the window. She worked close to the painting, her brush moving from the palette to the canvas and back again, surely and competently. From time to time, though, she stepped back from her work to view the whole, and in doing so, she regained perspective on the totality of the picture in progress.

That's what a retreat should provide for you — the opportunity to look at your work from a distance to be sure it's becoming the picture you want it to be.

This retreat doesn't have to be long. Thirty minutes will usually do. But it does have to be uninterrupted time when you can focus on your career. Once a month is minimal, every two

weeks is better, and weekly is best of all.

You may want to be alone, or, if you have a close friend whose counsel you trust, you may want to include that person. Such a retreat also works well for two or three colleagues who understand each other's challenges and who are invested in each other's success. If that's the case for you, allow 30 minutes per person.

Whether you retreat alone or with someone, you need to go to a place that is comfortable and quiet. It may be a corner of your home, a parked car, an inviting park — or, if you're fortunate enough to have access, a shady glade or a secluded beach.

If you're meeting with colleagues, you may be tempted to meet over coffee or lunch. Don't. Being in a public place where distractions interfere with thoughtful conversation can sabotage your effort. If you want food or drink, arrange for a private room where you will not be disturbed.

Once there, you will want to answer these questions:

- What contributions do I want to make in my career?
- Is the work that I'm doing now enabling me to make those contributions?
- If it is, what do I need to do to develop my skills and improve my effectiveness?
- If not, what adjustments in course do I need to make? Can I make them within this position, or do I need to consider a major career move?
- Do I need to be preparing myself for another role in the near or distant future? If so, in what ways?
- What are the immediate next steps to take in order to be the best that I can be?
- Am I taking time at work and at home for things that really matter?

The answers to those questions can lead to a variety of decisions, such as the ones Lopez and Graham made.

NEW DIRECTIONS

Charlotte Miller's retreats pushed her in another direction. A consummate teacher, she had been courted tenaciously by the district's director of science, who wanted her to come to the central office so that she could share her talents with other teachers.

Finally persuaded, she succeeded admirably. Principals and teachers rushed to secure her help in their schools, and her professional learning presentations were packed. But she missed the classroom so much that she often went home in tears. After a year in the central office, she returned to teaching. She has never regretted her decision.

Mario Bustamente was discontented in the central office, too, but unlike Miller, he wanted to help more teachers than he could reach in his position. So instead of moving back to the classroom, he resigned from the district and went into consulting, offering his services to schools throughout the country.

He had much to learn. He attended conferences on con-

sulting, learned how to keep books, bought equipment and other resources to support his work, and set up a business. His services were well-received, and he reveled in his newfound independence. He continued to serve the district, too, offering professional learning tailor-made for the schools that he was previously unable to reach.

Other examples illustrate even more paths:

- Fernetta Douglas left her central office post just long enough to complete her doctorate. She returned to a promotion that placed her just where she wanted to be — in charge of reading and language arts for the district.
- Henry Watson pursued and attained a lateral move from a staff to a line position. In his new role, he had the authority to help principals make needed changes in their schools.
- Sharee Landers thought long and hard about what really matters. Then, with her husband's enthusiastic approval, she left her career for five years to be a full-time mother. During that time, she stayed abreast of developments in teaching and learning, and, when the children were in school, she returned to the central office and continued her career.

THE BIG PICTURE

All of those decisions have these factors in common: the willingness to step back from the busyness of the work itself to look at the larger picture; the capacity to answer candidly those probing questions; the ability to imagine alternate pathways and their likely outcomes; and finally, once the best course of action is identified, the courage to act.

The situations here have another important aspect in common. All of the people mentioned were seeking the opportunity to give what they had to offer — not higher salaries, more power, or prestige.

In some cases, their giving resulted in promotions and raises, but those were byproducts of the efforts, not the goals. These people were dedicated to serving teachers and children, to improving schools, to helping others, and, by following the steps discussed here, they succeeded.

Your situation will be different from theirs. Your answers to the questions will be different, and your path will be different. But the process is the same, and it begins with the retreat. You should leave that experience either with renewed commitment to the work at hand or with plans to adjust your priorities or your course. Either way, you will be better prepared to make significant contributions to the district you serve, and you will also be in control of your career.

•

Billie Birnie (bfbirnie@bigbend.net) is a professional learning consultant and author of *A Teacher's Guide to Successful Classroom Management and Differentiated Instruction* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2014). ◼

A FRESH APPROACH *for* FRESH FACES

CENTRAL OFFICE LEADERS ADOPT STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT NEW TEACHERS

By Suzanne Molitor, Dina Burkett, Allison Cunningham, Cheryl Dell, and Anna Presta

In Ontario, Canada, supporting new teachers and mentors as part of new teacher induction is a mandate for all 72 districts within the province.

The Ontario Ministry of Education established the New Teacher Induction Program in 2006, ensuring that new teachers in the province receive orientation, mentoring, and continuous professional learning in their first year. Through this program, districts receive funding and opportunities to support mentors and respond to the needs of novice teachers in their first and second year.

The Peel District School Board embraced this mandate as an opportunity to be intentional, adaptive, and responsive to the learning needs of mentors and beginning teachers. Serving 153,000 students in 206 elementary and 37 secondary schools, this growing school board is the second largest in Ontario.

The New Teacher Induction Program educational reform context, together with current knowledge about effective professional learning, has affected how central office staff think about the design and implementation of professional learning according to Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011).

District leaders have adopted new strategies and processes for performing their work. Roles have shifted as central leaders adopt conceptual and interactive roles, including designers of evidence-informed professional learning, facilitators of teacher professional learning, and instructional coaches developing teacher leaders. The program supports differentiated learning for novice teachers and mentors.

CENTRAL LEADERS AS DESIGNERS OF EVIDENCE-INFORMED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

As designers of new teacher and mentor professional

learning, district leaders understand that professional learning is an intentional, ongoing, systemic process (Guskey, 2000). Recognizing the limitations of one-size-fits-all professional learning, the district has developed a differentiated model of professional learning that fosters relationships and develops future leaders.

For instance, beginning teachers have choices in ongoing learning opportunities in a variety of formats and content areas (full-day release sessions, after-school networks, school-based mentoring, co-planning, co-teaching, and co-debriefing). Mentors, too, have opportunities to learn about the role, about conducting learning-focused conversations, and developing leadership skills in coaching, collaborating, and consulting (Lipton & Wellman, 2003).

District leaders (instructional superintendents, coordinators, consultants, and school-based administrators) create conditions and develop structures (Fullan, 2001) to support daily job-embedded learning for beginning teachers and mentors.

Peel District School Board leaders developed a framework that allows for intentional and informed decision making and invites multiple voices for teacher professional learning. (See diagram on p. 55.) With guiding principles at the core, this iterative process for planning, implementing, reflecting, and redesigning builds mentor and new teacher capacity at many levels through professional learning that is differentiated and responsive.

Continuous reflection by district staff and steering committee administrators throughout the school year enables ongoing revision and redesign of professional learning guided by this theory of action: "If we provide new teachers and their mentors with collaborative, differentiated professional learning to build relationships, confidence, and efficacy in their practice, then they will be able to transfer best practices to support student success."

Data gathering is a constant, yearlong process to evaluate effectiveness of professional learning (Guskey, 2000) and to inform decisions about future designs. Gathering feedback in the form of exit tickets, electronic survey systems, verbal feedback, observations, and focus groups helps the district create professional learning that is responsive to teacher needs.

Coordinators and consultants participate in an ongoing collaborative inquiry process as they gather a variety of data from
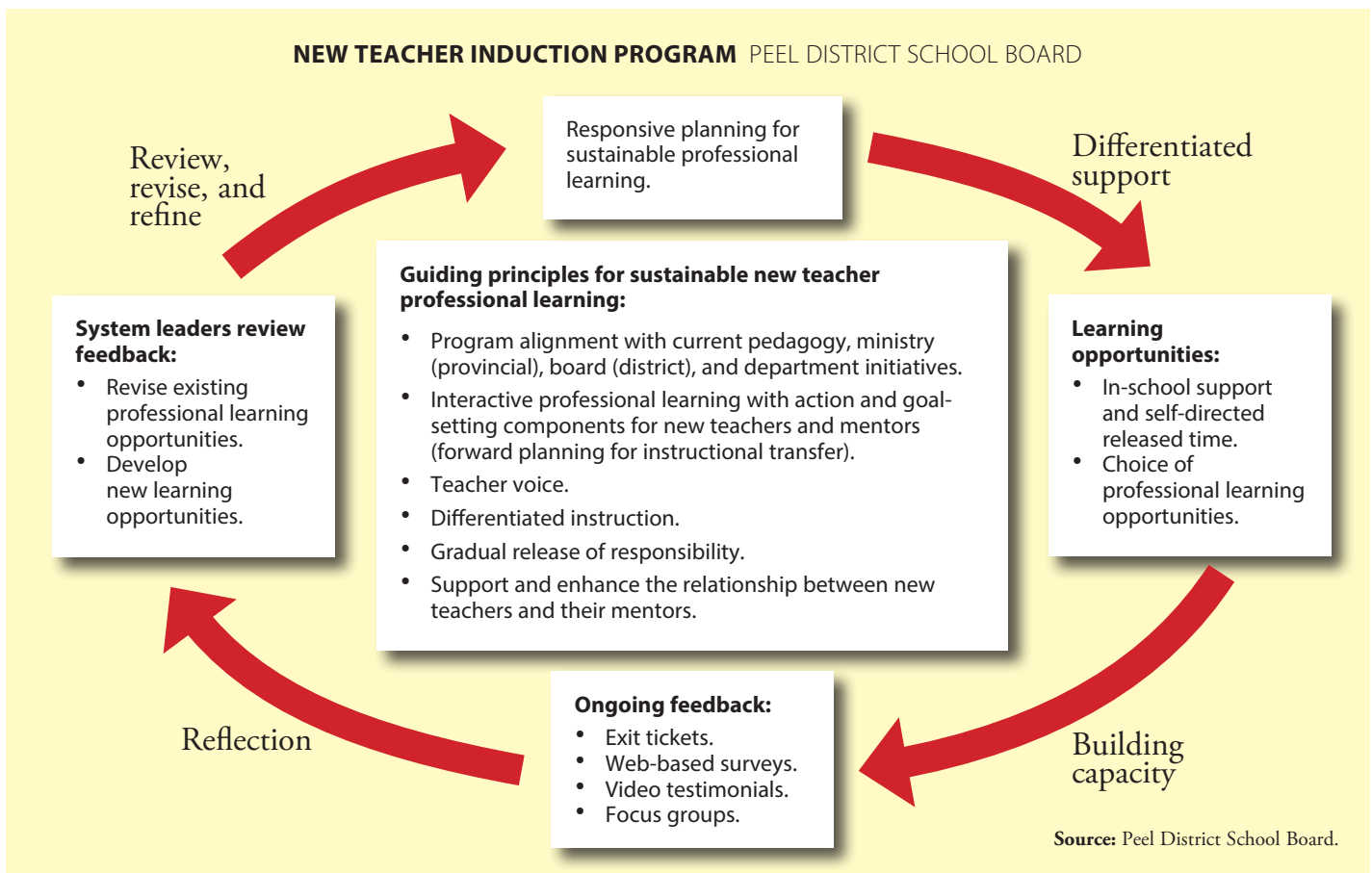

Heather Taggert and Amy MacRae of Beryl Ford Public School created this poster display to illustrate their collaborative inquiry work, which focused on creating a classroom environment that reflects students' cultural diversity.

the mentees and mentors to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher professional learning. The process includes the combined perspectives of district leaders with the voices of the mentors and novice teachers.

These data help central leaders see what is working, gauge the usefulness of resources provided, and understand what type of professional learning inspires teacher confidence. This, in turn, supports improved teacher efficacy and ultimately promotes student success.

CENTRAL LEADERS AS FACILITATORS OF TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

As facilitators of teacher professional learning and as co-learners, the district team aligns district priorities and pedagogical focus to teacher needs by providing practical instructional

NEW TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAM PEEL DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Review, revise, and refine

Responsive planning for sustainable professional learning.

Differentiated support

Guiding principles for sustainable new teacher professional learning:

- Program alignment with current pedagogy, ministry (provincial), board (district), and department initiatives.
- Interactive professional learning with action and goal-setting components for new teachers and mentors (forward planning for instructional transfer).
- Teacher voice.
- Differentiated instruction.
- Gradual release of responsibility.
- Support and enhance the relationship between new teachers and their mentors.

System leaders review feedback:

- Revise existing professional learning opportunities.
- Develop new learning opportunities.

Learning opportunities:

- In-school support and self-directed released time.
- Choice of professional learning opportunities.

Ongoing feedback:

- Exit tickets.
- Web-based surveys.
- Video testimonials.
- Focus groups.

Reflection

Building capacity

Source: Peel District School Board.

and assessment strategies that build capacity and improve teacher practice for student success.

Coordinators and consultants collaborate to plan and lead professional learning that provides teachers with a menu of choices, including the topic focus (assessment for learning, classroom management, differentiated instruction, literacy, numeracy) and format (full-day, after-school, or cohort sessions).

For instance, coordinators of assessment, literacy, numeracy, new teacher induction, English language learners, and equity collaborate to build system capacity together. They pool content-specific expertise, share resources, co-plan, and co-facilitate new teacher and mentor professional learning in targeted areas such as how to create learning experiences that are culturally responsive, scaffold instruction to support English language learners, and embed formative assessment practices.

During the initial session, district instructional leaders model and explore practical, high-yield, research-based strategies for assessment and instruction that are grounded in provincial and district initiatives and are theoretically sound. Mentees and mentors learn together, commit to try a new strategy, and return with evidence of learning in the form of observations, conversations, and products to share and reflect on with their colleagues.

Recognizing that sustainability is difficult if teachers do not commit to implementation, central leaders engage teachers in collaborative reflection, planning, and goal setting. As a result, novice teachers report a high degree of transfer of instructional and assessment strategies and a high degree of instructional confidence.

At follow-up sessions, teachers share artifacts and collaboratively reflect on student and teacher learning and the impact of the strategy employed. With this authentic, job-embedded component, professional learning focuses on real classrooms, with real implementation, in real time.

CENTRAL LEADERS AS INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES DEVELOPING TEACHER LEADERS

A yearlong collaborative inquiry project for Year 2 teachers and mentors engages central leaders as instructional coaches and developers of teacher leaders.

Central leaders have devised a process to support novice teachers and mentors in identifying a challenge of practice based on student needs to develop a theory of action and adapt instruction in response (Donohoo, 2013). Content-specific professional learning, coaching, dialogue about effective in-

WHAT TEACHERS LEARNED IN YEAR 2

"The collaborative inquiry project … is an absolutely wonderful opportunity for us to take a look at what is happening in our classroom, to examine what is working, things that we are curious about, and question what is not working so well. There's something we can do to make that change."

— *Jeannie Sroka, mentor and teacher librarian, Shelter Bay Public School*

"Working with my mentee, we devoted professional attention to knowing our students' learning styles and multiple intelligences, establishing learning goals, co-constructing success criteria with students and providing specific feedback throughout the process. … Students demonstrated increased enthusiasm and engagement in learning activities. They felt genuine success when they were

given choice. By providing the feedback to the students, they could revisit the success criteria, make improved revisions to their work, and meet their own individual goals."

— *Cathy Witten, mentor, grade 6 teacher, Alloa Public School*

 "The collaborative inquiry process has made me a more reflective teacher. I am able to look at my practice in a different light and see where I need to improve and what I need to do in my classroom to really speak to the individual learners in my room."

— *Vanessa Zahra, Year 2 teacher*

 "When we provided students with scaffolds for talk (graphic organizers, prompts) to generate strategies for improving learning skills, they were more intentional about learning skills, setting goals, and choosing their own learning

strategies. We learned that it is useful to maintain a visual reminder of student goals for the term and for us as teachers to revisit the goals at least once a month."

— *Lana Parker, grade 8 French immersion integrated arts teacher and mentor, and Nicole Fenech, Year 2 teacher and mentee, Earnscliffe Senior Public School*

"My participation in the Year 2 collaborative inquiry empowered me to focus and strengthen my practice to make the most of my time with my students. It helped me create more moments in the day that students willingly and capably took charge of their learning by authentically engaging in meaningful learning. The strategies I learned helped me to help my students give me their best, and I hope these skills will become part of their tool kit for lifelong learning and success."

— *Milissa Sannes, grade 2/3 teacher, Sir Winston Churchill Public School*

structional practices, professional resources, and collaborative support are all part of the process.

Teachers receive an iPad and professional learning about purposeful use of technology as a tool to document observations, conversations, and products to illustrate their learning and the impact on student learning.

Through this job-embedded learning process, district leaders offer beginning teachers a sustainable, evidence-informed model of instruction that is based on assessment for learning and teacher adaptation of instruction. They also nurture teacher leadership, scaffolding, and encouraging novice teachers to go public (Lieberman & Miller, 2004) with their practice and their learning. Mentors, as informal teacher leaders, also participate in and model a transparent inquiry stance moving theory into praxis.

LESSONS LEARNED

An explicit collaborative inquiry model supports district leaders in creating a well-coordinated process for teacher professional learning. Both mentors and Year 2 teachers report that intentional, focused instruction through partnerships in collaborative inquiry has had a positive impact on teacher practice (see sidebar above).

Collaboration and participation of coordinators, consultants, and instructional coaches results in a responsive system format, deep teacher professional learning, and emerging teacher leadership in novice teachers.

Beginning teachers and mentors have learned to attend to the instructional core, understanding the connection between

the teacher, the students, and the curriculum content as a result of their theory of action exploration.

Professional learning impacts teacher practice if teacher choice and collaboration guide the learning process.

REFERENCES

Donohoo, J. (2013). *Collaborative inquiry for educators: A facilitator's guide to school improvement.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

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

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

Lieberman, A. & Miller, L. (2004). *Teacher leadership.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lipton, L. & Wellman, B. (2003). *Mentoring matters: A practical guide to learning-focused relationships.* Sherman, CT: Miravia.

•

Suzanne Molitor (suzanne.molitor@peelsb.com) is an instructional coordinator and Dina Burkett (dina.burkett@peelsb.com), Allison Cunningham (allison.cunningham@peelsb.com), Cheryl Dell (cheryl.dell@peelsb.com), and Anna Presta (anna.presta@peelsb.com) are instructional coaches at the Peel District School Board in Ontario, Canada. ■

Call for proposals.

Submit your proposal to present a session at Learning Forward's 2015 Annual Conference and join your colleagues in exploring best practices in professional learning.

Proposals must be submitted online.
Apply at http://proposals.learningforward.org.
Deadline: Jan. 31, 2015.

LEARNING FORWARD 2015 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
WASHINGTON, D.C. | DEC. 5–9, 2015

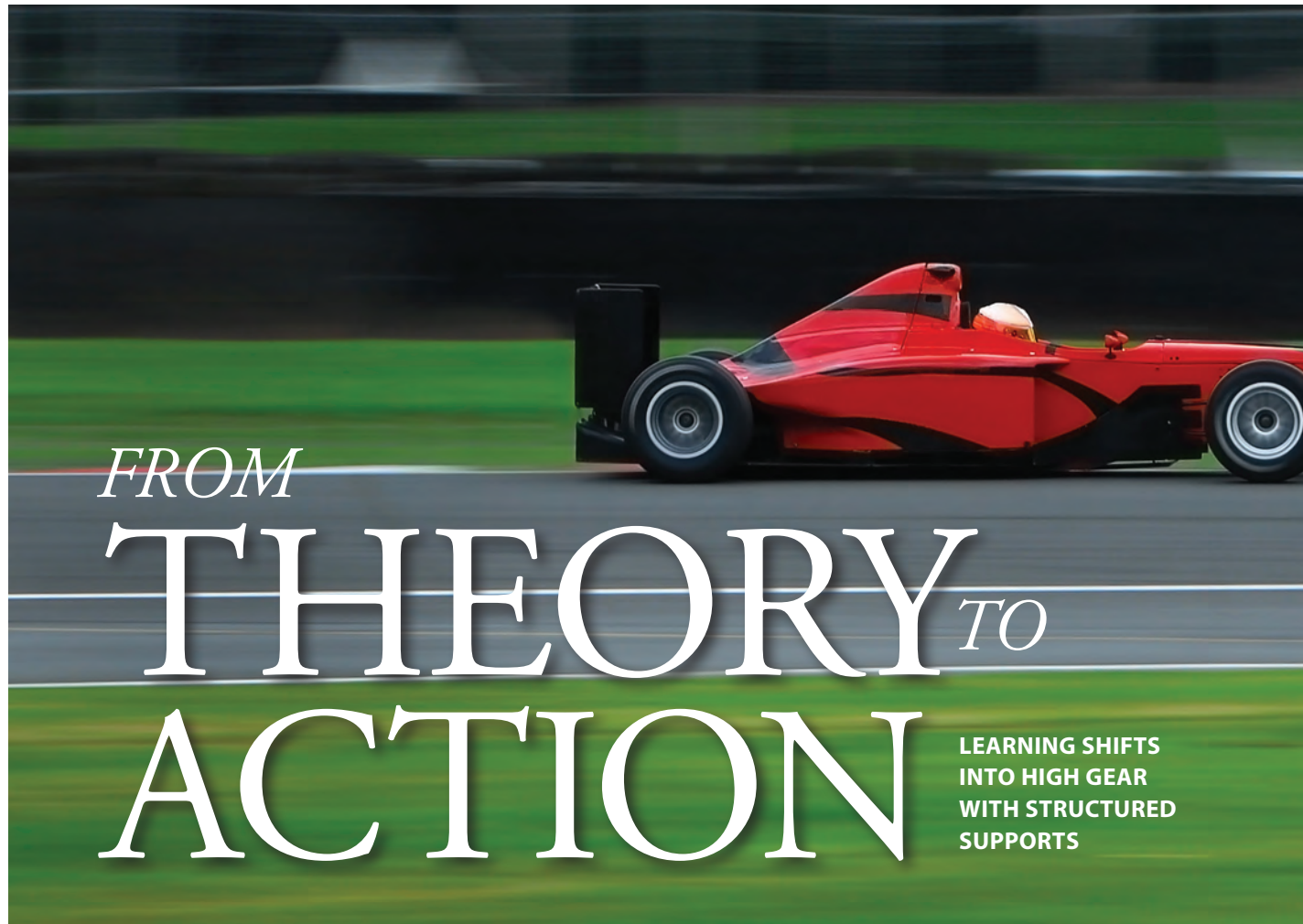*THE Learning Conference for transforming professional learning*

Apply to present in

Washington DC

learningforward
THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

www.learningforward.org | 800-727-7288

FROM THEORY TO ACTION

LEARNING SHIFTS INTO HIGH GEAR WITH STRUCTURED SUPPORTS

By Andrea Anderson, Beth Steffen, Chad Wiese, and M. Bruce King

While teachers face new expectations for student learning and more equitable educational outcomes, instruction and assessment remain rooted in traditional approaches that are largely inequitable, culturally irrelevant, and intellectually disengaging, contributing to gaps in academic achievement across student groups (Darling-Hammond, 2010; King & Bouchard, 2011).

The quality of teaching is the most important school-related factor influencing student learning and more equitable outcomes (Elmore, 2004; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). But many current reform initiatives — high-stakes accountability, school closings and turnarounds, charter and voucher schools, teacher evaluations and pay based on student performance — do not engage directly with critical tasks of building capacity for improved teaching.

In an urban high school in the Midwest, however, principal and teacher leadership that promotes collaboration among staff results in teacher learning to strengthen the instructional core.

One of four comprehensive high schools in Madison, Wisconsin, La Follette serves about 1,500 students. As Madison's demographics changed dramatically between 2000 and 2013, so did La Follette's, shifting from largely white and middle class to 50% students of color and 50% economically disadvantaged students.

With some of the lowest annual student achievement results in the district, a perception among staff that students' poverty and low skills, as well as disengaged families,

were more potent than any teacher's impact led to a sense of futility.

La Follette teachers came to work every day, often excited about their content and feeling some affection for students, but left at the end of the day deflated by a sense that their best efforts were ineffective and unappreciated by students, their families, or the system in which they worked.

The transformation of La Follette High School — from a losing-ground institution to a model for other educators and for university researchers who study school improvement — is attributable to the coalescence of distributed instructional leadership around three essentials of strong professional learning communities: a focus on learning, collaborative culture, and results orientation.

Today, staff members increasingly concentrate on the implications of their actions for student learning — on knowing their impact (Hattie, 2012). Administrative and teacher leadership is evolving as it is enacted, promoting enhanced adult learning that fosters improved classroom practices and increased student achievement results.

La Follette's progress and lessons learned along the way are relevant for educators seeking to implement meaningful reforms. Central elements for La Follette's growth include:
- A small team of learning leaders that includes the principal;
- Key adults to lead the work in groups; and
- Schoolwide systems, grounded in a theory of action, to strengthen the instructional core.

LEARNING LEADERS

Administrator and teacher leaders, partnering to plan and implement schoolwide work, are critical. La Follette's principal and instructional coaches plan, facilitate, and participate in professional learning alongside the school's staff of nearly 200.

Schools that most effectively close achievement gaps have a principal who "views teaching as a continuous learning endeavor and models this by participating in and/or by facilitating professional development on-site" (Brown, Benkovitz, Muttillo, & Urban, 2011, p. 75). La Follette's

LA FOLLETTE HIGH SCHOOL TEAMS

	School-based leadership team	Instructional leadership team	Instructional coaching team	Innovation team
MEMBERS	Principal, 4 assistant principals, 2 instructional coaches, 6 department chairs, school psychologist.	Principal, 2 instructional coaches, 15 (all) department chairs.	Principal, 4 assistant principals, 2 instructional coaches.	2 instructional coaches, assistant principal, social worker, speech/language clinician, 8 teachers.
FOCUS	Support and monitor implementation of theory of action.	Department leadership, instructional improvement, and student learning.	Instructional improvement and student learning.	Instructional improvement and student learning.
ACTIONS	Data-informed decision making and progress monitoring.	Facilitating professional learning communities during professional learning time.	Instructional rounds, collaborative classroom visits, classroom walk-throughs.	Implementing classroom practices consistent with theory of action and leadership for professional learning communities during professional learning time.
MEETING FREQUENCY	Bimonthly and biannual half-days.	Bimonthly and quarterly half-days.	Monthly.	Biannual half-days.

culture has improved through the principal's participation in learning with teachers, his frequent classroom visits, and his ownership of the school's theory of action.

La Follette's leaders understand the value of multiple staff groups working toward the same outcome — purposeful instruction to increase student achievement. Together, they work strategically with assistant principals, department chairs, and innovative teacher leaders in four integrated teams (see table above).

These colleagues, trained in Adaptive Schools strategies (Garmston & Wellman, 2009) and Critical Friends protocols (National School Reform Faculty, 2008), are committed to, as Harvard's Richard Elmore emphasizes, learning the work by doing the work (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009) in job-embedded professional development designed to forward the school's theory of action.

THEORY OF ACTION

Results from the Educational Planning and Assessment System's (EPAS) testing suite, and from the required 10th-grade Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam, reveal La Follette students' perennial struggles with literacy.

For the past three years, nearly two-thirds of 9th graders have entered the school below proficient in reading. Because of La Follette's consistently low student achievement results, the staff needed a focused and effective way to measure and support student academic growth.

Using *Instructional Rounds in Education* (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009) as a guide for focusing on the instruc-

tional core, the principal and instructional coaches worked with members of the instructional leadership team and the innovation team to develop a problem of practice and theory of action (see box on p. 59), which frame all of La Follette's schoolwide work and which is revised annually as the school's work evolves.

A theory of action that clearly emphasizes all teachers providing multiple, standards-based opportunities and supports to shift the cognitive load so that students critically think, read, and write is a grand idea. But changing the reality of a school where such learning experiences were infrequent, inconsistent, and unequally distributed across student groups required structured supports for colleagues to examine their own and each other's practices in order to improve them.

3 LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Since 2011, La Follette leaders have developed and implemented three significant collaborative professional learning experiences for bringing the theory of action to life. Engaging colleagues in these experiences as learners has transformed the school's culture while improving instructional practices (see table on p. 63).

Instructional rounds

Conducting biannual instructional rounds at La Follette has been a boon. Participants include school staff, district colleagues, and university partners who identify schoolwide themes, grounded in classroom-based "noticings and wonderings," aligned to the school's theory of action. "Noticings" are

3 COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

	Instructional rounds	Collaborative classroom visits	Classroom walk-throughs
LENGTH OF VISIT	25 minutes.	45 minutes.	10-15 minutes.
WHO	20-25 school colleagues and external partners (3-4 per observation)	1 administrator, 1 instructional coach, and 1-3 teachers.	1 instructional coaching team member.
OUTCOMES	Schoolwide themes.	Classroom noticings and wonderings.	Classroom noticings and wonderings.
HOW OUTCOMES ARE SHARED	Group discussion of schoolwide themes.	Preconference and post-conference discussions with classroom teacher.	Schoolwide walk-through form emailed to teacher with actionable, specific feedback.

descriptive evidence or data of what the students and/or teacher is doing or saying. "Wonderings," based on noticings, are connected to the theory of action and form the foundation of the key themes that emerge from an instructional rounds session.

For example, a theme from participants in the first rounds session in 2011 asked, "Do students in your school know what they are working on in every class, every day, and why?"

In response to that feedback, school leaders prioritized being more explicit about each lesson's purpose, learning targets, and assessments by supporting teachers to post them on classroom purpose boards.

During a subsequent rounds session, participants wondered, "What is your schoolwide definition of critical thinking?" La Follette's teams seized that theme and explicitly identified, described, and structured critical thinking opportunities into their daily work with students. Continuously evolving, the school's 2014 focus, informed by the previous year's rounds themes, is shifting the cognitive load to students, a theme reflected in the most current theory of action.

Collaborative classroom visits

Seeking to strengthen instructional practices, school leaders introduced collaborative classroom visits in fall 2011, and after 2½ years, nearly every La Follette teacher has participated in at least one collaborative classroom visit.

Developed as an experience for teachers to reflect on their instructional purpose and practices connected to the theory of action, a collaborative classroom visit brings a classroom teacher together with an administrator, a departmental colleague, and an instructional coach through a process that includes a preconference, a classroom visit, and a post-conference. Each collaborative classroom visit follows an established protocol to ensure consistency across experiences.

The power of collaborative classroom visits is twofold. First, a teacher articulates her thinking about how a lesson connects to the theory of action by completing and sharing an instruc-

tional purpose sheet during the preconference. Based on Tovani (2004), La Follette's instructional purpose sheet asks teachers to identify how they'll support students' critical thinking, reading, and writing and how their students will make their thinking and learning visible (Hattie, 2012).

Second, the visitors learn with and from colleagues and students in authentic ways as they share descriptive noticings and wonderings. Administrators are working with staff to focus on the instructional core, and staff members are learning from each other, which leads to reflection on their own practices that forward the school's theory of action.

Classroom walk-throughs

The school began using purpose boards after instructional rounds participants questioned the clarity of each lesson's purpose to all students in all classes. However, hanging a 2-by-3-foot board in every classroom doesn't ensure that daily purpose, learning targets, and assessments are posted, or that if they are posted, they actually support students' critical thinking, reading, and writing.

To reflect on purposeful teaching and learning, the principal and instructional coaches began weekly classroom walk-throughs. Using an iPad, a member of the instructional coaching team observes a class for about 10 minutes and completes a Google form to document the teacher's purpose board use, incorporation of school-prioritized Common Core State Standards for literacy, and students' visible thinking and learning. Teachers then receive immediate and actionable feedback about their instructional practices aligned to the school's theory of action.

Instructional rounds, collaborative classroom visits, and classroom walk-throughs are three collegial professional learning experiences that promote staff members' reflection about their instruction and student learning.

These interconnected experiences also promote the theory of action's regular use, ensuring it is much more than just another nifty slogan for reform that goes nowhere. Staff collabo-

rate for meaningful change, and their commitment has been strengthened through their collective learning.

NEXT STEPS

For all of La Follette's progress, there continues to be tremendous room to grow. While staff members see the value in promoting collaborative and independent critical thinking, reading, and writing, the opportunities they offer students to build and continually practice those skills do not yet occur consistently.

Because La Follette's students enter high school below benchmark in reading, they need to accelerate their learning to outpace expected one-point gains. Staff members' belief that adult actions play critical roles in students' academic achievement has led to promising growth in student assessment data. Spring 2013 EPAS results show that 10th graders overall made a two-point gain. Student results increased not only in reading, but in all subject areas tested: English, math, and science.

Other data show the impact of La Follette's distributed leadership, collaboration, and focus on learning. Suspension rates have declined consistently, and attendance rates have improved for all student groups. Ninth graders are now much more likely to be on track for graduation by successfully completing required credits, and course failure rates dropped from 13.4% in 2009-10 to 8.4% in 2013-14 (see chart above right).

The instructional leadership team has monitored its development over the past five years, using an instrument designed by University of Wisconsin-Madison partners. In 2008-09, the team's initial self-assessment in key areas ranged from two to three on a five-point scale. The team has shown significant growth in all areas of leadership: the rating of a clear and focused vision more than doubled from 2.1 to 4.8, while the team's focus on student learning jumped from 2.7 to 4.9.

It is not coincidental that La Follette's data, measuring staff's focus on learning and student achievement, embody elements of a successful professional learning community. Symmetry in results for both adult actions and student achievement develops over time, as progress in adult actions precedes measurable growth in student achievement. A comprehensive high school with promising collaborative leadership for professional learning is a strong foundation to ensure students' growth for college, career, and community readiness.

REFERENCES

Brown, K.M., Benkovitz, J., Muttillo, A.J., & Urban, T. (2011). Leading schools of excellence and equity: Documenting effective strategies in closing achievement gaps. *Teachers College Record, 113*(1), 57-96.

City, E., Elmore, R., Fiarman, S., & Teitel, L. (2009). *Instructional rounds in education.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The flat world and education: How America's commitment to equity will determine

9TH GRADERS TERM 4 COURSE FAILURES
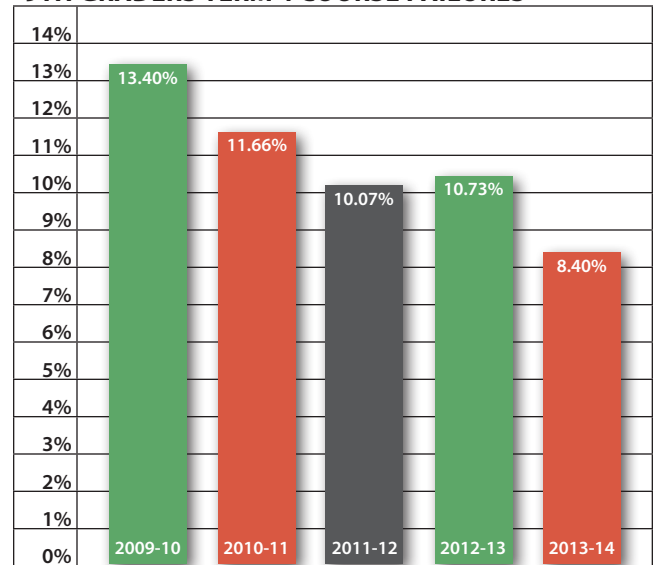
Source: Madison Metropolitan School District.

our future. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Elmore, R. (2004). *School reform from the inside out: Policy, practice, and performance.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Garmston, R. & Wellman, B. (2009). *The adaptive school: A sourcebook for developing collaborative groups* (2nd ed.). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Hattie, J. (2012). *Visible learning for teachers.* New York, NY: Routledge.

King, M.B. & Bouchard, K. (2011). The capacity to build organizational capacity in schools. *Journal of Educational Administration, 49*(6), 653-669.

Leithwood, K., Louis, K.S., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning.* New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation.

National School Reform Faculty. (2008). *National School Reform Faculty resource book: Adult learning in the service of student achievement.* Bloomington, IN: Harmony Education Center.

Tovani, C. (2004). *Do I really have to teach reading?* Portland, OR: Stenhouse.

•

Andrea Anderson (amanderson2@madison.k12. wi.us) and Beth Steffen (bsteffen@madison.k12.wi.us) are instructional coaches and Chad Wiese (cwiese@madison. k12.wi.us) is principal at La Follette High School in Madison, Wisconsin. M. Bruce King (mbking1@wisc.edu) is a faculty associate in the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis at University of Wisconsin-Madison. ■

Tonio Verzone of Anchorage, Alaska, creates a visual map during his development of professional learning communities.

EYES
on the
PRIZEWINNERS

FOUNDATION PARTNERS WITH RECIPIENTS TO SET GOALS, MEASURE GROWTH, AND ENCOURAGE REFLECTION

By Janice Bradley and Shirley Hord

The Learning Forward Foundation is a source of inspiration and aspiration for dedicated educators who want to impact leadership for change and improvement in schools. Just imagine these scenes of inspiration in action:

- Tonio Verzone of Anchorage, Alaska, snowshoed across Alaska to support schools in developing professional learning communities;

Photo by CYNDEE CASSELMAN

Sharon Yarbrough, from left, and Jennifer Atkins collaborate with Darlene Miller in Knoxville, Tennessee.

- Adrienne Tedesco of Gwinnett County, Georgia, facilitated school staffs to plan and work together more collaboratively;
- Kenneth Hamilton of Monroe, New Jersey, encouraged district principals as they improved their leadership communications skills; and
- Darlene Miller of Knoxville, Tennessee, organized six opportunities for a school staff to learn effective instructional practices in literacy.

Acting on the belief that the continuous learning by educators is essential to improving the achievement of all students, the foundation raises funds to provide learning opportunities for superintendents, principals, learning teams, and individuals who will advance Learning Forward's vision: Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.

The Learning Forward Foundation has grown from a foundation that simply raised and awarded money to a more robust system of responsibility and accountability to donors and recipients. Learning partnerships with award recipients are key to this transformation.

LEARNING, GROWING, AND ADVANCING

Serious change requires thoughtful, committed people. Shift-

ing from a fundraising organization to one focused on learning and empowering creates shared responsibility and accountability for using donor funds purposefully and strategically.

This new role enables the foundation to identify recipients' needs and provide appropriate support as they work to attain their project goals.

To assess how their work is progressing, recipients engage in reflective telephone conversations with foundation board members throughout the year. During these conversations, recipients answer four questions:

1. What are the goals of your project? What results do you hope to achieve?
2. What actions are you taking to achieve the intended results?
3. What progress are you making toward the goals?
4. What is the evidence of progress?

The questions are designed to encourage reflection. From this conversation, recipients can determine how well their actions are moving them toward their project goals, assess the degree to which change is being made, and identify evidence for the improved outcomes that they report.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS
What are the goals of your project or what results do you hope to achieve?

Asking about project goals elicits a mental image of the destination of the learning journey and the desired result. Do we know where we are going? Is there a clear image of the result?

The most effective goals are SMART goals: specific, measurable, attainable, results-based, and time-bound. Without defining clear, measurable goals, recipients can't anticipate project outcomes.

Planning, introducing, and implementing projects require time. If goals are clearly defined, recipients can more easily create and implement an effective plan with actions to reach the intended goals. Asking about goals distinguishes the difference between a goal and an activity and clarifies whether the goal is attainable.

What actions are you taking to achieve the intended results?

Activities aligned with the goals focus attention on visualized results. Actions must align with achieving the intended results.

For example, if the goal is to increase student success in literacy, actions must involve teachers learning more effective literacy strategies to support student improvement. Are teachers actively engaged in activities to develop skills? Are teachers receiving follow-up support in the classroom? Asking how actions align with attainment of the goal increases the likelihood for successfully meeting goals.

What progress are you making toward the goals?

Measuring progress is important in order to identify and support recipients' needs and ensure that their improvement projects are successful. One of the foundation's consistent findings is the need to deepen and strengthen knowledge and skills for using strategies and tools for measuring progress.

Foundation board members use information gathered during these phone conversations to design webinars, identify text materials, and inform facilitators who serve recipients with this task.

What is the evidence of progress?

Available data and information indicate whether recipients are meeting their goals. Foundation members help recipients sift through data, which enables them to monitor and assess their progress in implementing new practices.

Instead of using the terms *monitor* or *assess*, foundation members talk about the concept of *observing growth*. To improve schools or districts, what is not working successfully for educators and students must be replaced by something that has the potential for success.

To make the transformation, those expected to enact the change must learn and grow in their knowledge about what the change is and expand their skills of how to use it. Thus, learning is the key word for adults and students in schools.

Observing the growth of the implementers — foundation award recipients — and supplying support where needed is essential for staying motivated and reaching successful change.

These deep conversations between Learning Forward Foundation members and recipients elicit rich sources of information about recipients' specific changes, the progress being made toward attaining desired results, and the level of support needed to achieve the desired changes.

SEEING CHANGES

Both Learning Forward Foundation members and recipients have experienced change as a result of participating in these reflection conversations. Here are some examples of feedback:

- "I appreciate these conversations because I know I can gain direction for my specific questions, such as about the survey and feedback piece."
- "(These conversations) help me look back and see that I am making a difference."
- "The calls are check-ins that make me feel supported. It can get lonely out here sometimes."
- "Your questions help me think. A thought I have right now is that I can develop a means by which to gather quantitative data about this process. I hadn't thought that through before the questions."

Learning Forward Foundation members have learned alongside recipients about the need for clear goals for direction, a clear image of the results, and the need for tools and processes to assess progress.

Recipients also need support from a reflective partner — someone who asks clarifying questions that promote reflection, push thinking, and create space for generating solutions that respond to changing conditions.

CELEBRATIONS

Partnerships with recipients begin early in the foundation's process. Once a scholarship or grant application is accepted, foundation members begin learning alongside recipients as they take action toward their project goals. After one or two years, foundation members celebrate positive changes that resulted from recipients' work. Some of these accomplishments include:

Learning team: One learning team's goal was to increase student writing skills. To achieve the desired results, team actions included whole-group learning sessions, analysis of student assessment data, reflective conversations in professional learning communities, and modeling of the skills in the classroom. Evidence at the end of the year showed that 3rd- and 4th-grade students significantly improved their skills in writing subsequent to teachers' implementation of strategies they learned while participating in a variety of learning designs.

Principal: To increase student achievement in literacy, one principal developed a professional learning plan designed to build ongoing capacity in teachers' subject-area content knowledge. She led an administrative team that organized six professional learning sessions to help teachers learn how to successfully implement a new reading series. Evidence through teacher reflections indicates that the majority of teachers valued having time and support for learning during the school year.

Academy: Recipients told foundation members that the Learning Forward Academy experience provided time to engage in rich, thoughtful, and informed conversations with colleagues that deepened their understanding of professional learning. In addition, recipients learned how leadership can impact the ability to provide solutions to district problems of practice.

Superintendent: The goal of one recipient's grant was to foster districtwide cultural change by developing leaders' communication skills to effectively engage all educators in collegial conversations. As a result of leadership coaching, the superintendent observed differences in how educators talk with one another as they engage in discourse about how to change instructional practices.

MOVING FORWARD

Foundation members and award recipients are ready to advance learning and progress. As committed educators, foundation members want to learn how to provide the best possible support so awardees achieve successful results.

Foundation awards focus on some aspect of the awardees' classroom, school, or district reality. Unacceptable student performance drives their quest to improve classroom and school practices.

To improve, programs and practices that don't lead to successful student learning need to be replaced with new ways that hold potential for success. This means that foundation award recipients are conducting projects of change in their schools and districts, and support for change is essential.

Foundation members realize that recipients require strategies and tools to more accurately assess their project's progress as well as support in facilitating recipients' assessments. Data-based efforts can focus on increased quality of teaching and, consequently, increased student learning.

In the spirit of Learning Forward, the Learning Forward Foundation recognizes the importance of creating and modeling a learning culture where knowledge grows and advances. Through the foundation's efforts, members can transform professional learning in order to realize the ultimate goal: improved student achievement.

•

Janice Bradley (jbradley@nmsu.edu) and Shirley Hord (shirley.hord@learningforward.org) are members of Learning Forward Foundation's board of trustees. ■

> **Once a scholarship or grant application is accepted, foundation members begin learning alongside recipients as they take action toward their project goals.**

Study links professional learning to impact on students' civic literacy

WHAT THE STUDY SAYS

Civic literacy is not only core to success in college and careers, but also to responsible participation in civic life in adulthood. This study contributes empirical evidence that professional development has positive and significant impact on teacher knowledge, practices, and dispositions, and student learning of complex concepts and critical thinking skills.

Professional development interventions provided by Facing History and Ourselves, a nonprofit organization, is planned, nonprescriptive, and sustained over time. It includes seminars, workshops, coaching/mentoring, access to print and electronic resources for classroom use, modeling classroom lessons, guest speakers, communities of support, and opportunities to address implementation challenges.

This mix of professional development practices coupled with rich curricular resources affects not only teachers' practice, but also their sense of competence, degree of satisfaction, and level of burnout. When teachers

•

Joellen Killion (joellen.killion@ learningforward.org) is senior advisor to Learning Forward. In each issue of *JSD*, Killion explores a recent research study to help practitioners understand the impact of particular professional learning practices on student outcomes.

At a glance

A randomized control study of professional development for humanities teachers provides empirical evidence that teachers who experienced the planned intervention showed positive, significant impact on variables related to self-efficacy; satisfaction with professional support, engagement, and growth; and positive, significant impact on their 9th- and 10th-grade students' historical understanding and four variables related to civic literacy.

THE STUDY

experience these changes, students' opportunities and engagement in civics learning and classroom environment change.

When students' learning environment and experiences change, they gain deeper understanding of history, increased civic responsibility, efficacy, tolerance, and engagement as well as social and ethical awareness.

Study description

Schools with sufficient numbers of 9th- and 10th-grade teachers and with limited or no previous exposure to Facing History and Ourselves were recruited to participate in a planned professional development intervention.

Schools, including public, public charter, and private schools, that met eligibility requirements were randomly assigned to an intervention group that would participate in the professional development in Year 1 or control group

whose participation was delayed until Year 2. Most intervention schools met federal criteria for underperformance and high poverty. Participating teachers received a stipend.

In Year 1, 80 schools within a geographical area surrounding Facing History and Ourselves regional offices participated in the study, with 40 in each of the intervention and control groups. Seventy-eight teachers participated in the intervention, and 102 were in the control group.

Attrition during Year 1 accounted for eight schools in the intervention group and 10 in the control group. About 1,400 students from the randomly selected classes of teachers participated in the study.

Ninth- and 10th-grade humanities teachers in the intervention schools participated in a summer program, Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PRACTITIONERS

The professional development intervention, despite the impact on teachers and more limitedly for students, fails to meet all the Standards for Professional Learning at a high level. Had all standards been met at high levels, the results, particularly for students, might be more significant.

Standards the professional development intervention meets well: Resources, Learning Designs, and Outcomes. Intervention teachers had access to regional staff, print and digital curricular and instructional resources, and a stipend for participation in the summer program and for implementing the program.

The intervention program incorporated formal and informal learning designs and available ongoing support. Outcomes focused on teacher and student cognitive and affective changes associated with full engagement in civic life.

Standards the intervention meets weakly: Learning Communities, Leadership, Data, and Implementation. While teachers had access to online communities, they did not have the benefit of engaging in ongoing sustained communities of educators with collective responsibility for student success nor apply a cycle of continuous improvement to refine their practice and student learning.

Researchers engaged school leaders during the selection phase, yet not in the implementation of the program, nor did they address the systems and supports within schools for effective professional learning. Data were used to measure defined outcomes to answer the research questions, yet no student or teacher data were used to craft the specific professional development intervention.

Previous evaluation studies may have used data to identify specific areas of need, but there is no mention of how the intervention or researchers used data for needs analysis or ongoing implementation monitoring and adjustments.

Implementation support and expectations for accessing support were limited, and the actual implementation support provided was limited. This might account for the overall level of high-fidelity implementation at the teacher and classroom level.

The results of this research study might be even greater had the professional development intervention more intentionally incorporated and adhered to all Standards for Professional Learning.

They implemented the program in the subsequent school year in one randomly selected class they taught and received follow-up support from regional office staff as they designed their lesson plans and implemented the units.

Intervention teachers also received classroom materials and access to print and digital instructional and content resources.

Questions

Researchers posed two research questions and several hypotheses related to teacher and student changes as a result of the professional development.

1. What is the impact of this approach to professional development and follow-up coaching on high school teachers' sense of self-efficacy, burnout, and perceptions of professional engagement and satisfaction compared to a group of control teachers who were not assigned to participate in the professional development?

The authors hypothesized that teachers without experience with the intervention and randomly assigned to the intervention would develop greater self-efficacy and professional engagement and satisfaction and lower levels of burnout than control teachers.

2. What is the impact of assigning teachers to professional development aimed at supporting classroom implementation of the Facing History and Ourselves program on 9th- and 10th-grade students':
- Perceptions of the classroom climate and civic learning opportunities;
- Civic skills, dispositions, and behaviors;
- Historical thinking skills; and,
- Social and ethical awareness, compared to a group of control students taught by teachers who were not assigned to such professional development?

The authors' hypothesized that the intervention students would:
- Perceive their Facing History class as having a more open climate and providing more opportunities to learn about civic matters;
- Develop greater civic skills, dispositions, and behaviors; and
- Demonstrate the capacity to reflect more deeply on social relationships and ethical decisions and be more likely to value active, prosocial solutions to social conflict (e.g. collaboration) and ethical dilemmas (e.g. standing up for others).

The authors also hypothesized that, given the lack of research on how this educational approach impacts adolescents' historical thinking skills, program students would perform at least as well as control students in their academic subject area (Barr et al., in press).

Methodology

High-fidelity implementation of the program included attending a four- or five-day Facing History and Ourselves professional development session, accessing staff support, using print and digital resources, and teaching a minimum six-week unit with at least two hours devoted to each part of the course

of study. About half of the teachers met high-fidelity criteria, with the remaining half at medium and low fidelity.

Researchers measured outcomes using existing and newly developed survey instruments, administered as baseline and follow-up to the implementation, in two teacher domains including 12 outcomes and seven student domains including 15 outcomes.

The teacher domains included teacher self-efficacy and teacher perception of professional engagement and satisfaction. The efficacy outcomes included teacher beliefs and efficacy in instructional practices relevant to the program such as promoting deliberation, tolerance, student civic literacy, and historical understanding.

Student domains included civic responsibility, civic self-efficacy, civic participation, tolerance, classroom climate and civic learning opportunities, historical understanding, and social and ethical components.

Analysis

Researchers used a two-level hierarchical linear model to address random assignment at the teacher and classroom levels. The model included other factors relevant to the characteristics of students, such as gender and race; to the school, such as type of school; and to the teacher, such as level of education and subject taught. There were no significant differences between teacher groups or between student groups on baseline measures.

Results

The professional development intervention impacted both teachers and students. Teachers experienced greater effects, demonstrating the causal effects of professional development. Statistically significant differences were found on 10 of the 12 teacher outcomes and for five student outcomes, including historical understanding and four aspects of civic literacy at the end of the intervention.

Limitations

The study measures teachers' first implementation of the program. As teachers become more familiar with the resources, content, and pedagogy over time, student impacts might increase. ■

Champions of learning:
District leaders build skills to boost educator practice.
By Kay Psencik, Frederick Brown, Laura Cain,
Ramona Coleman, and C. Todd Cummings

At a turnaround high school where staff had experienced four leaders in as many years, a first-year principal brought teachers together to change the way they work. He zeroed in on a few strategic goals and asked teachers to collaborate around those. Then, along with the administrative team, he provided the support they needed. This is what leadership looks like in Fort Wayne (Indiana) Community Schools.

Wisdom from the factory floor:
For best results, limit initiatives, build capacity,
and monitor progress.
By Chad Dumas and Craig Kautz

Central office staff at Hastings (Nebraska) Public Schools have created the conditions for change to occur: They focus their efforts by limiting initiatives. They build the capacity of people in the district to make change happen. And they monitor implementation of learning throughout the district. The district uses four learning approaches aligned with the district's focus: monthly learning team meetings, classroom walk-throughs, leadership workshops, and school improvement leadership days.

Partners in achievement:
Synergy fuels growth in literacy and student engagement.
By Wendy James, Dave Dersken, and Kerry Alcorn

Saskatoon Public Schools in Saskatchewan, Canada, decided 10 years ago to undertake major changes in how it supports professional learning. The district began with two major priorities: increasing literacy in elementary schools and student engagement in high schools. To support that, the central office facilitates planning to clarify goals, helps narrow the focus, marshals evidence of progress, and lays a research foundation for district leadership and teaching practices.

Learning to be a change agent:
System leaders master skills to encourage buy-in
for reforms.
By Nonie K. Lesaux, Sky H. Marietta,
and Emily Phillips Galloway

The authors designed and led professional learning institutes for system leaders who support school-based literacy improvement in a large school district. Their goals were to create professional learning that simultaneously builds participants' knowledge about the content of the literacy-based reform and participants' knowledge about leading and supporting implementation.

Beyond buses, boilers, and books:
Instructional support takes center stage for principal
supervisors.
By Sarosh Syed

The principal's job has evolved into one that centers on promoting high-quality teaching and learning in classrooms. But in most districts, the principal supervisor's job hasn't adapted to that change. Around the country, 14 districts are participating in a program funded by The Wallace Foundation to build up the role of principals' managers in the central office as a means to improve principal effectiveness. *This article is sponsored by The Wallace Foundation.*

To move your career forward — retreat:
Set aside uninterrupted time to view your work
from a distance.
By Billie F. Birnie

It is all too easy in the fast-paced life of the central office to lose sight of things that really matter. That's why every staff member needs to schedule personal retreats — uninterrupted time when you can focus on your career. A retreat offers the opportunity to look at your work from a distance to be sure it's becoming the picture you want it to be.

A fresh approach for fresh faces:
Central office leaders adopt strategies
to support new teachers.
By Suzanne Molitor, Dina Burkett, Allison Cunningham,
Cheryl Dell, and Anna Presta

In Ontario, Canada, supporting new teachers and mentors as part of new teacher induction is a mandate for all districts in the province. The Peel District School Board embraced this as an opportunity to be intentional, adaptive, and responsive to the learning needs of mentors and beginning teachers. District leaders adopted new strategies and processes for performing their work, and roles have shifted as central leaders adopt conceptual and interactive roles.

From theory to action:
Learning shifts into high gear with structured supports.
By Andrea Anderson, Beth Steffen, Chad Wiese,
and M. Bruce King

The transformation of La Follette High School in Madison, Wisconsin, into a model for educators and university researchers is due to instructional leadership around three essentials of strong professional learning communities: a focus on learning, collaborative culture, and results orientation. Administrative and teacher leadership is evolving, promoting adult learning that fosters improved classroom practices and increased student achievement.

coming up

in December 2014 *JSD*: **TEACHER EVALUATION**

INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

Writing for JSD

- Themes for the 2015 publication year are posted at **www.learningforward. org/publications/jsd/upcoming-themes.**

- Please send manuscripts and questions to Christy Colclasure (**christy. colclasure@learningforward.org**).

- Notes to assist authors in preparing a manuscript are at **www.learningforward. org/publications/jsd/writers-guidelines.**

feature

Eyes on the prizewinners:
Foundation partners with recipients to set goals, measure growth, and encourage reflection.
By Janice Bradley and Shirley Hord

The Learning Forward Foundation began as a fundraising organization to support learning opportunities for superintendents, principals, learning teams, and individuals. Over time, the foundation has grown to become a more robust system of responsibility and accountability to donors and recipients. Foundation members have learned alongside recipients about the need for clear goals for direction, a clear image of the results, and the need for tools and processes to assess progress. Recipients also need support from a reflective partner — someone who asks clarifying questions that promote reflection, push thinking, and create space for generating solutions that respond to changing conditions.
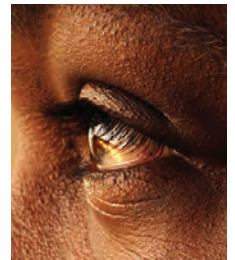
columns

Lessons from research:
Study links professional learning to impact on students' civic literacy.
By Joellen Killion

A study of professional development for humanities teachers shows the impact on teachers as well on 9th- and 10th-grade students' historical understanding and civic literacy.

From the director:
Standards serve as guideposts for today's central office.
By Stephanie Hirsh

As the role of the central office evolves, the Standards for Professional Learning are key to ensuring effective professional learning for all teachers.

@ learning forward

LEARNING FORWARD BY THE NUMBERS

As the school year wound down in late May, Learning Forward conducted its first comprehensive membership survey since 2010. The survey was sent to current and former members along with other educators who have never joined. More than 2,400 people responded. Here are some highlights.

90% HAVE a master's degree or higher.

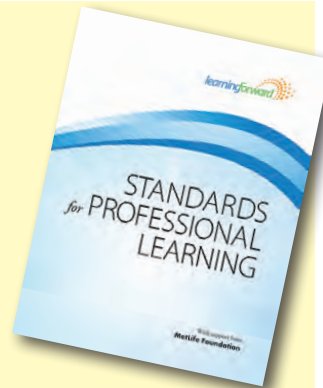HAVE worked in education for more than 16 years. **78%**

97% PLAN to remain in education.

ASPIRE to a job change. **65%**

70% OF CURRENT members say that the Standards for Professional Learning are very or quite important in their work.

OF RESPONDENTS who have never been members are very or quite familiar with the standards. **46%**

TOP THREE REASONS FOR JOINING LEARNING FORWARD

1 Member publications.

2 Being part of a community focused on professional learning.

3 Advocacy about professional learning's importance.

TOP CHALLENGES FOR ALL RESPONDENTS

1 Prioritizing, managing, and implementing new programs and initiatives.

2 Justifying the investment in professional learning.

New central office philosophy makes professional learning a team effort

on board
JULIE BLAINE

Standing barely 5 feet tall, Janie Pyle, associate superintendent of curriculum and instruction for Raytown (Missouri) Quality Schools, is nothing short of a stick of administrative dynamite.

Affectionately known as Dr. J, she leads her troops with might, passion, and a sense of urgency. I recently met with Pyle to discuss how her role as central office administrator has changed during her six years in Raytown.

"One of the primary responsibilities of central office to is to be well-researched, well-read, and well-trained in the best professional learning," Pyle said. "Marzano, Reeves, Schmoker, Wiggins, Hattie — our staff deserves the best. You simply have to know the research to effect positive change in your school system. But change theory must also be modeled. And it takes time.

"No matter how much dust it stirred, I knew I had to get out of the office and into schools, modeling and building relationships," she said. "The community did not immediately understand this untethering. Patrons, parents, secretaries, administrators, and teachers didn't understand why I was continually away from my desk during office hours.

"When you make this decision to be visible in schools — modeling

•

Julie Blaine is president of Learning Forward's board of trustees.

your expectations and giving effective feedback — change eventually begins to happen," she said. "I knew if we wanted Raytown administrators and teachers to meet new challenges of research-based practice, then every administrator must become visible in every classroom, and all teachers must begin working collaboratively with all colleagues to hone their practice.

"In Raytown, we target an unwavering focus on five specific components for improvement," she said. "We want our administrators and staff to possess a comprehensive understanding of rigorous curriculum design and to recognize and discuss critical issues related to effective instruction. We want them to perform meaningful instructional walk-through observations and evaluations and to analyze various data forms with a focus on instructional trends. At every opportunity, we expect everyone to give and receive powerful, honest feedback."

Pyle noted that the partnership between the district and University of Central Missouri's Central Regional Professional Development Center helps anchor the district's focus. The center's consultants provide custom professional learning in assessment design and curriculum development aligned to Missouri Learning Standards.
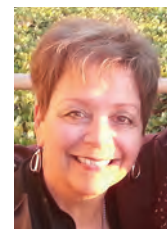
The center also conducts ongoing

curriculum reviews for English language arts and mathematics. Working alongside center consultants, Pyle and Raytown leadership teams orchestrate planning, leading, and debriefing these sessions. Professional learning is a team effort.

When asked to describe the change she is most proud of during her tenure, Pyle said, "I'm most proud that we no longer work in isolation. The realization that the status quo is more painful than change is now our own truth.

"I visit classrooms regularly. Administrators practice walk-throughs, monitoring application of best practice," she said. "We have developed a team of 160 teacher leaders who are constantly in and out of each other's classrooms, holding themselves accountable for district teaching standards. Their classrooms are open models for mentoring new skills and sharing knowledge of instructional planning and delivery for all our teachers."

Janie Pyle

As I was leaving her office, Pyle handed me a flier entitled "Dr. Pyle's Assumptions," which included these: "You are more comfortable with change than most. You are a positive person and solution-oriented. You are collaborative and invite questions and discussion. You are comfortable with your success and failure and can learn equally from both." That pretty much sums up a new central office philosophy. ■

book club

DESIGNING SCHOOLS FOR MEANINGFUL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING:
A Guidebook for Educators
By Janice Bradley

Grounded in research, learning theories, and Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning, this book outlines the processes for selecting and creating learning designs appropriate for and specific to the context and needs of adult learners at their school site.

Designed to encourage educators to take risks and try new practices, this resource offers tools, processes, and procedures that show how to promote adult active engagement. Learn how to create optimal learning experiences that inspire and how learning designs can promote individual and collective creativity with a diverse school staff.

The book includes vignettes and cases of enactment showing how real people in real settings design learning opportunities connected to classrooms.

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.**

LEARNING FORWARD CALENDAR

Nov. 6:	Webinar featuring Jane Kise. Topic: Common ground, common goals.
Nov. 15:	Manuscript deadline for June 2015 *JSD*. Theme: Individualized, personalized, collective learning.
Nov. 20:	Deadline to order advance tickets for the Learning Forward Foundation Benefit Concert featuring Little River Band.
Dec. 6-10:	2014 Annual Conference in Nashville, Tennessee.
Dec. 8:	Learning Forward Foundation Benefit Concert featuring Little River Band, Nashville, Tennessee.
Jan. 15, 2015:	Manuscript deadline for August 2015 *JSD*. Theme: Career pathways.

JOIN THE LEADERSHIP SOCIETY

The Learning Forward Foundation has established a Leadership Society as a way to recognize donors at different levels of giving with a range of donor benefits.

Benefits include a certificate of giving, recognition on the website and in the annual report, lunch with the executive director, complimentary memberships, and conference registrations.

Donation levels are:
- Copper: $20-$99;
- Bronze: $100-$299;
- Silver: $300-$499;
- Gold: $500-$999; and
- Platinum: $1,000 or more.

For more information, visit www.learningforward.org/ foundation/leadership-society.

The Learning Forward Foundation is committed to developing professional learning to improve educator performance that drives an increase in student achievement. Funds raised by the foundation provide grants and scholarships for individuals, schools or teams, principals, and superintendents to further Learning Forward's purpose.

Join the Leadership Society and pay it forward by investing in educators making an impact through professional learning.
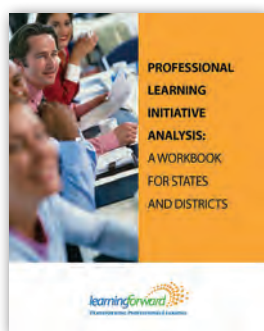
Professional Learning Initiative Analysis: A WORKBOOK FOR STATES AND DISTRICTS

Given what system leaders must accomplish with limited resources, they must make bold decisions about their current investments to achieve high-priority goals related to implementing college- and career-ready standards. This workbook is designed to guide users through a five-step process of understanding what professional learning is available in their system; what is known about it; how it contributes to achieving the system's goals; and what actions leaders might consider to increase the overall effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of professional learning.

http://bit.ly/YxPeVJ

Learning Forward supports Common Core

In response to recent polls about educator and public opinion on the Common Core State Standards, Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh affirms Learning Forward's support of Common Core and outlines her concerns about the shifts in public and teacher support.

Hirsh goes on to detail actions that school and system leaders can take to support their teachers and communities in holding high expectations and creating the learning experiences that make achieving those expectations possible. These include: Clearly articulate a vision for learning; provide relevant adult learning opportunities; create structures that support learning; and align district, school, and individual goals.

http://bit.ly/1rIKZNU

Passionate learner seeks same

Learning Forward Director of Communications Tracy Crow explains why educators are obligated to be passionate learners:

"The word obligation gives pause here. Are we willing to say that every educator MUST improve his or her practice? Do we think that school and system leaders are willing to say this about everyone they work with? Are they willing to say it about themselves?

"Ultimately, yes, Learning Forward stands behind that belief, even knowing that people resist being told what they are obligated to do. Educators who are unwilling to commit themselves to continuous improvement can only be successful with students in the long term through good luck. And relying on luck to ensure that all students succeed is incredibly risky, though it has certainly been a strategy at work at various times in many schools."

http://bit.ly/YxP4xC

Join us for monthly Twitter chats

Learning Forward is now hosting monthly discussions on Twitter. On the third Tuesday of each month, join members and peers using #lfpdchat for open discussions and resource sharing. Each month, the conversation will cover a particular professional learning focus. Be sure you're following @LearningForward to keep on top of the latest news.

https://twitter.com/LearningForward

Standards serve as guideposts for today's central office

One of my favorite jobs was when I was the free enterprise consulting teacher for the Richardson (Texas) Independent School District. I had a hefty budget to buy resources and plan events for teachers, and a lot of autonomy with little accountability. I introduced teachers to new programs, and we raised funds to build Enterprise City, a hands-on learning experience for all 4th and 7th graders to experience the free enterprise system. Almost 30 years later, it remains a valued part of the social studies curriculum throughout the Dallas area.

Then I became director of professional development, another position I loved because of the opportunity to continue to serve teachers. The freedom that I had in both positions would not look the same today — and I wouldn't want it to. Frankly, other than Enterprise City, little evidence remains of the investments we made in those days.

Fast-forward 25 years: My daughter, Leslie Ceballos, has a new job supporting teachers from the district office. Leslie's transition to this new opportunity prompted me to share with her what I consider the most important responsibilities for someone in her role.

When I worked in the central office,

•

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

one of my primary responsibilities was providing a wide range of resources. While it will be important for Leslie to provide helpful resources, she has a greater responsibility to examine how people, time, and technology resources are aligned to support student, teaching, and program standards, and make shifts as needed.

I also know that Leslie will need to plan and lead workshops during the day and after school. But, more importantly, she'll participate as a member and facilitator of job-embedded learning communities, both in the central office and in schools. She'll need to support learning teams in ongoing cycles of continuous improvement as a core element of her work.

Leslie will surely be visiting classrooms and sharing expertise to help teachers improve. She'll use pre-and post observation protocols to provide focused feedback and be responsible throughout the year for individual and team support for implementing new strategies.

As our conversation continued, I realized I was, as usual, making my way through the Standards for Professional Learning, but this time considering the role someone in today's central office plays in a comprehensive professional learning system. If I were to make my way through all seven standards, I'd advise Leslie on the importance of developing leadership skills, becoming a data use expert, understanding deeply

how adults learn, and using student and teacher outcomes to plan all learning.

The fact that I see those standards as the guideposts to Leslie's work each day represents the biggest shift between how I operated in the central office 25 years ago and what she does today. While I certainly aspired to offer teachers in my district what they needed to excel, professional development was at best a nice benefit for employees.

Today, professional learning is a key component of an educator's work, and therefore Leslie's most important responsibility is ensuring that every teacher she supports has access to effective professional learning every day. Effective professional learning and support is essential to ensuring every student experiences great teaching every day. And when you are given the opportunity to support that, then you will remember this as your favorite job ever. ■

2014 INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING CONFERENCE

FEATURING
JIM KNIGHT

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

Marcia Tate

Christian van Nieuwerburgh

Rebecca Frazier

Joellen Killion

Jamie Almanzan

Donalyn Miller

David Ross

Marti Elford

teaching | learning | coaching

Explore how whole school reform is enhanced when principals, teachers, and coaches use team planning, effective workshops, and effective support to improve student learning.

Participants will:

- Understand effective instructional coaching techniques

- Learn to build healthy relationships and foster commitment with fellow educators through instructional coaching.

- Take away strategies for efficiently conducting classroom observation, teacher enrollment, debriefing, and modeling inside and outside the classroom.

- Attain leadership skills that will encourage school-wide reform, build consistency and spread ideas across schools

KEEP LEARNING
OCTOBER 27–29, 2014
LAWRENCE, KANSAS

Register Today
www.corwin.com/tlc

CORWIN
A SAGE Company