

Pieces of the learning puzzle:

Aligned goals shape learning for one and all.

By Tracy Crow

In schools and districts that have professional learning systems established, a vision and standards for learning guide everything associated with what and how educators grow. Educators have resources and structures for setting learning goals — as individuals, on teams, and across schools. They have multiple sources of data to analyze as they set learning goals. They have strategies for identifying the expertise in their teams and buildings and for knowing when they need to tap external support. Their supervisory, peer, and coaching support align to sustain and extend their individual and collaborative learning.

An argument everyone wins:

Shared learning unites teachers across schools and grade levels.

By Lauren Goldberg, Brad Siegel, and Gravity Goldberg

A group of districts in New Jersey developed professional learning that would explore the nature of argument as a means to invigorate teachers, reach all educators in the districts, and directly impact classroom practice. Teachers worked together across grade levels and content areas, then applied the strategies they learned in their classrooms. Afterward, they compiled and shared their experiences, bringing cohesiveness across schools, grade levels, and departments.

Data drive these coaches:

Literacy project merges school goals with teachers' learning needs.

By Anne Ittner, Lori Helman, Matthew Burns, and Jennifer McComas

An initiative that set out to help all students become proficient readers by 3rd grade demonstrates how coaching can support both collective and individual learning. Literacy coaches in the project balanced the goals of the initiative with professional learning that addressed the varying needs and aspirations of individual teachers. Data from an observation tool gave instructional leaders, literacy coaches, and teachers a common language around effective teaching and how to recognize it.

Tailored to fit:

Structure professional learning communities to meet individual needs.

By Alyson Adams and Vicki Vescio

Just as educators differentiate learning for diverse students in their classrooms, they must also remember that professional learning communities include individuals who

need different things in order to learn and who may be at drastically different places in their careers or their teaching capabilities. To maximize the potential impact of professional learning communities for teachers' professional development, educators need to maintain a simultaneous focus on both collective and individual learning.

'What if' sparks a new way to learn:

Texas elementary designs its own teacher-led postgraduate school.

By Alyssa Toomes

Looking for a way to personalize professional learning, school leaders at Weber Elementary in Houston, Texas, created a postgraduate school right on campus and named it Weber U. At Weber U, teachers decide what they want to learn, teachers lead the professional learning, and virtual learning is an option for time-strapped educators. Courses are grounded in data that keeps student achievement at the forefront. Keeping the classes small encourages engagement from teachers across multiple grade levels.

A sense of balance:

District aligns personalized learning with school and system goals.

By Debbie Donsky and Kathy Witherow

Working at both the system and school level to balance the need for individual and collective learning, the York Region District School Board in Ontario, Canada, has shifted away from top-down professional learning to a new definition of professional learning that is responsive to the local school context, embedded in practice, focused on collaboration and inquiry, and part of an ongoing iterative process. And, in this new definition of professional learning, the principal is a co-learner.

The shift from 'me' to 'we':

Schools with a coaching culture build individual and collective capacity.

By Holli Hanson and Christine Hoyos

Coaching in schools is not new. What is fundamentally different in a culture of coaching is that all members of the school community see themselves as coaches. While there may be formally appointed coaches and teacher leaders to lead the work, developing all staff to coach each other accelerates adult learning, which, in turn, accelerates student learning. Professional learning becomes human-centered, focusing on the human interaction of learning. Developing a coaching culture happens in a variety of contexts through action learning. A key factor in the process is job-embedded support.

features

Net results:

Online protocols boost group learning potential.

By Alan Dichter and Janet Mannheimer Zydney

Protocols are strategies for having structured communication to enhance problem solving, encourage different perspectives, and build shared knowledge. The protocol process helps professional development leaders build community. Educators have begun to use protocols to facilitate professional development in online spaces — partly because people need to connect from different places, but also to take advantage of new environments for learning. The authors include an example of one protocol presented in both an in-person and online version.

The high cost of convenience:

Satisfying short-term needs erodes long-term learning.

By Diane P. Zimmerman

“Satisficing” — selecting the first option that meets a given need but which might not be the most optimal — is a critical problem of practice for educators. It interferes with deep, sustained reflection on practice and the learning that results. To eliminate satisficing behaviors, educators need to apply strategies that open up curiosity, engage in the moment, and seek immediate feedback. They also need to be flexible and make adjustments to sustain engagement and the commitment to learning that leads to long-term success

columns

Lessons from research:

Study links learning design to changes in knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors.

By Joellen Killion

A program aimed at improving teacher feedback during active learning demonstrates the connection between effective professional learning and changes in classroom practice.

From the director:

Spread effective teaching from room to room.

By Stephanie Hirsh

Schools that commit to everyone learning and sharing responsibility for the success of every student can ensure that every student in the school experiences great teaching every day no matter which teacher serves in the classroom.

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