

Keys to collaboration:

What it takes to move toward collective responsibility.

By Tracy Crow

Having professional learning communities on the schedule doesn't always fulfill teachers' collaboration needs. How can schools and systems create structures and supports so educators engage in the kinds of collaborative problem solving and intentional learning that they value? Here are several critical factors in supporting meaningful collaboration for lead learners to consider.

Talk that teaches:

How to promote professional dialogue and growth.

By Lynsey Gibbons and Melinda Knapp

What types of talk promote teachers' professional growth? In two vignettes, 4th-grade teachers and instructional leaders examine student work and observe classroom instruction. These learning designs encourage teachers to talk in ways that develop a shared understanding of teaching, which is instrumental to their professional growth. Instructional leaders play an important role in creating a culture that encourages learning and growth.

Collaboration by design:

School chooses strategies that allow teachers to learn with and from each other.

By Jeff Keller and Marfel Kusko

Teachers at Marylin Avenue School in Livermore, California, used data team process, lesson study, peer observations, and lab lessons to identify needs, set goals, and plan professional learning that was job-embedded, ongoing, and focused on the curriculum. Marylin's learning system allowed teachers to take risks and innovate and encouraged everyone to measure for effectiveness. Since engaging in these learning practices, student test scores in math and English language arts have increased.

In the driver's seat:

Teacher-led model moves learning in the right direction.

By Lisa Sullivan and Theresa Westover

Grants through California's Teacher-Based Reform (T-BAR) program allowed teachers to select professional learning that would meet their personal needs and be responsive to their local school context. A survey and case study showed that the majority of teachers felt their participation increased their confidence and pedagogical knowledge, improved their classroom instruction strategies, and eased their transition to Common Core standards and expectations.

Crowdlearning:

8 districts pool resources to focus on assessment literacy.

By Paula Dillon, Cassandra Erkens, Diane Sanna, and Linda F. Savastano

Eight Rhode Island school districts joined together to develop a culture of assessment literacy through ongoing professional learning focused on team-specific actions aligned to school, district, and state initiatives. The districts pooled their funding to engage a national expert to coach and guide their work. Their goal was to create a professional learning community that would develop understanding and application of assessment for learning at the classroom and building levels. Early results are promising.

Coaching side by side:

One-on-one collaboration creates caring, connected teachers.

By Nancy Akhavan

A school district administrator sets out to find insights into optimal coaching experiences for classroom teachers. She surveyed teachers around the U.S. and analyzed student achievement data to determine what types of coaching have a positive impact for teachers and student learning. Study results highlighted five attributes for coaching: people skills; a focus on the teacher's needs; availability; an understanding of data's role in planning instruction; and working side by side with teachers.

What is an authentic professional learning community?

By Shirley Hord

The most supportive environment for doing learning and improvement work is the professional learning community. Six research-based attributes that distinguish an authentic professional learning community are: structural conditions, supportive relational conditions, shared values and vision, intentional collective learning, peers supporting peers, and a shared and supportive leadership.

Create a safe space to learn:

Probing encourages teachers to delve deep into their thinking.

By Amy B. Colton, Georgea M. Langer, and Loretta S. Goff

Probes are statements or questions that invite a deeper level of conversation about how teachers are thinking about a student's learning. Probing is a communication skill that serves a critical role in promoting and maintaining a trusting environment while also supporting teachers to stay open to new ways of thinking and being.

features

When status quo is a no-go:

Maryland high school redefines its professional learning.

By Jared C. Wastler and Shannon Zepp

School leaders at Liberty High School in Eldersburg, Maryland, developed a professional learning system by identifying diverse professional learning opportunities, building a menu of options from which staff members may choose, then scheduling and promoting these learning opportunities. Today, teachers lead and facilitate all professional learning. Data plays a key role in the process, both as an observational and an evaluative component, to support professional learning.

More lessons from Bhutan:

6 years later, change takes root and flourishes.

By Alison Telsey and Laurie Levine

Six years after they began their work promoting sustainable special education programs and practices in Bhutan, two U.S. educators pause to reflect on what they've learned, share the successful elements of their experience, and explore how this knowledge can impact their future work. Building open and trusting relationships in a culturally diverse environment was as critical to the work as instilling the fundamental tenets of special education.

Important lessons from a software giant.

By Stephanie Hirsh

The key to success for any educational organization is rooted in these learning fundamentals: Culture matters, learning is for everyone, and a growth mindset is essential.

columns

Lessons from research:

Professional learning for math teachers is a plus for students.

By Joellen Killion

An international study based on TIMSS data shows that professional learning for teachers of 4th- and 8th-grade math is associated with increased student achievement.

From the director:

Why collaboration matters.

By Stephanie Hirsh

It's not just by chance that Learning Communities is the first of the Standards for Professional Learning. Learning collaboratively and collective responsibility contribute to more successful learning for students.

share your story

Learning Forward is eager to read manuscripts from educators at every level in every position. If your work includes a focus on effective professional learning, we want to hear your story.

JSD publishes a range of types of articles, including:

- First-person accounts of change efforts;
- Practitioner-focused articles about school- and district-level initiatives;
- Program descriptions and results from schools, districts, or external partners;
- How-tos from practitioners and thought leaders; and
- Protocols and tools with guidance on use and application.

To learn more about key topics and what reviewers look for in article submissions, visit www.learningforward.com/publications/jsd/upcoming-themes.

Write 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.



INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

Corwin Press.....	inside back cover, 17
Just ASK Publications & Professional Development.....	outside back cover
School Improvement Network.....	1
Solution Tree.....	inside front cover, 13