

### Smart currency:

Defining literacy in the modern age is crucial to building professional learning that prepares students for the knowledge economy.

*By Eric Celeste*

Our challenge is to understand what literacy is, how essential it is to learning, and therefore how important it is in the context of professional learning. If we don't thoughtfully examine our students' most essential learning needs now and into the future, we are unlikely to conceive professional learning that ensures educators have the knowledge and skills to meet those needs.

### Power plan:

High school fine-tunes instruction to build reading strength and stamina.

*By Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey*

Teachers at Health Sciences High & Middle College in San Diego, California, set a goal to help students read more and better. The school already engaged in collaborative learning, checking for understanding, and adapting instruction, but needed a literacy plan that would ensure students' skills improved. The focus for professional learning turned to building strength and stamina in reading. Teachers incorporated three

instructional additions to their literacy efforts: think-alouds with complex texts, close readings with complex texts, and wide reading from a constrained choice of texts.

### Tailored for a perfect fit:

Flexible templates promote standards alignment and teacher collaboration.

*By Linda Jacobson*

As part of a five-year Investing in Innovation (i3) grant, Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) is providing coaching, summer institutes, and online training to groups of teachers in Los Angeles and New York City schools. LDC gives teachers templates and tools that support students in doing more challenging work aligned to the Common Core. The process is also a growing experience for teachers as they work with colleagues to refine the lessons and tasks to ensure they are asking students the right questions.

### Common goal unites district:

Leaders and teachers build literacy and a collective responsibility for student learning.

*By Joanna Michelson*

*and James A. Bailey*

Traditionally, content-area teachers, particularly at the secondary level, have not been trained to teach

students how to access rigorous texts, including which disciplinary-specific strategies to use, how to break down and think about disciplinary text, or how to grapple with difficult questions while reading closely. Wyoming's Uinta County School District #1 is working to change that by engaging in literacy-focused professional learning in social studies, science, and vocational education. Here's how the district got everyone on board and what they've learned along the way.

### Literacy mash-up:

Discipline-specific practices empower content-area teachers.

*By Hannah Dostal and Rachael Gabriel*

The authors describe a process for building teachers' capacity to identify, develop, and engage in discipline-specific literacy instruction that supports both content and literacy aims. This process uses three questions to frame inquiry and guide discussions. Addressing these three questions can empower content-area teachers to incorporate literacy in ways that resonate with the content they teach while addressing the need for explicit instruction in reading and writing a wide range of text types for a wide range of purposes.

### INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

Corwin .....	inside back cover
Crayola .....	15
Heinemann .....	inside front cover
Just ASK Publications & Professional Development....	outside back cover
Learning Sciences International .....	21
Regent University .....	17
Solution Tree .....	1
Teachers College Press .....	44

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**Delicate layers of learning:**

Achieving disciplinary literacy requires continuous, collaborative adjustment.

*By Jacy Ippolito, Christina L. Dobbs, Megin Charner-Laird, and Joshua F. Lawrence*

A team of coaches, university consultants, and professors shares what it has learned about the possibilities and pitfalls of supporting middle and high school teachers' professional learning about disciplinary literacy instruction. In practice, explicit professional learning combined with tools that increase collaborative capacity form a powerful combination that leads to inventive and invested participation in implementing disciplinary literacy in a variety of classrooms.

**Dive into the deep end:**

Anchor texts build understanding of complex ideas.

*By Diane P. Zimmerman, Katrina M. Litzau, and Vicki L. Murray*

In 2014, instructional coaches Katrina Litzau and Vicki Murray designed professional learning to support teachers and principals in developing a deeper understanding of the cognitive processes of leadership. Steeped in the Common Core State Standards and building on quality literacy instruction, they based the

professional learning on anchor texts — pivotal texts selected to anchor a complex set of ideas. When an anchor text is paired with short readings, the discourse among learners deepens understanding and moves theory into practice.

**The view from the principal's office:**

An observation protocol boosts literacy leadership.

*By Sandi Novak and Bonnie Houck*

The Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association offered Minnesota principals professional learning that placed a high priority on literacy instruction and developing a collegial culture. A key component is the literacy classroom visit, an observation protocol used to gather data to determine the status of literacy teaching and student learning. The data collected provide a basis to discuss the strengths and needs of a school community using broad data patterns that focus on the school or district, not on individual teachers.

**feature****The power of teacher agency:**

Why we must transform professional learning so that it really supports educator learning.

*By Laurie Calvert*

If we know what good professional learning looks like, why aren't teachers experiencing it? The National Commission on Teaching & America's Future and Learning Forward talked with educators about the disconnect between what teachers need and what they are getting to discover how schools and systems might bridge the gap. For education leaders, the key is to pay greater attention to teacher agency — the capacity of teachers to direct their professional growth and contribute to the growth of their colleagues.

**columns****Lessons from research:**

Changes in coaching study design shed light on how features impact teacher practice.

*By Joellen Killian*

Exploratory analyses of the features and effects of two cohorts in a study of one-to-one coaching suggest that changes in the design and focus of coaching may explain the large positive effects on teacher practice in one cohort that were absent in the other.

**From the director:**

With a continuous improvement mindset, we can achieve equity and excellence.

*By Stephanie Hirsh*

Learning Forward's theory of action is based on assumptions that educators won't achieve their high goals for student learning if they don't set and measure high goals for educator learning.

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