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“Collaborating with Heinemann exceeded my greatest expectations. We started with author/consultant Lindsey Moses on two days of on-site PD, then collaboratively spent a year addressing the school’s most urgent needs with a blend of on-site and Skype sessions. During the second year, Lindsey customized our PD for specific needs at all grade levels. The work had a profound impact.”

—Jennifer Greenberg McCluskey, M.Ed.,
Literacy Coach





ONE CONSTANT finding in the research

literature is that notable improvements in education almost never take place in the absence of professional development.”

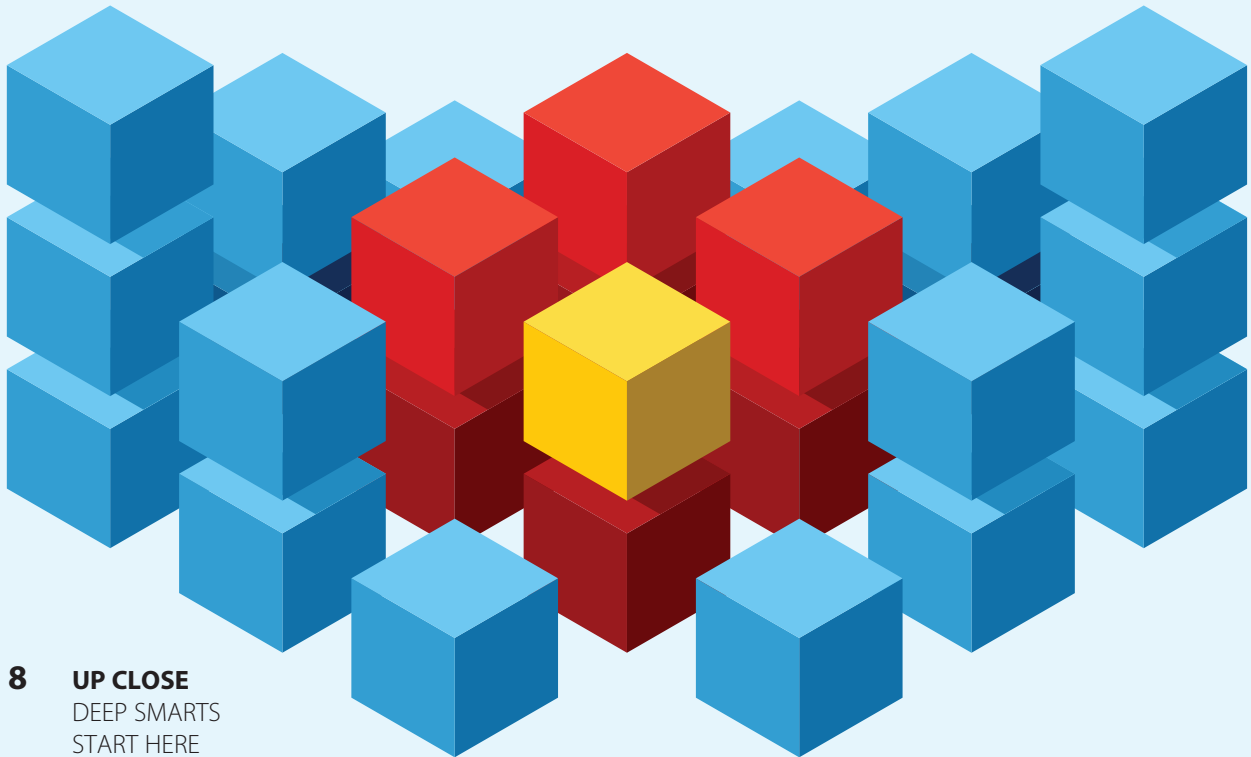
— *Thomas Guskey, p. 11*

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The Learning Forward Journal

JUNE 2016,
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theme:
FUNDAMENTALS



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10 Lay the foundation for great teaching and learning.

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Whether building their skill set or needing a refresher, learning leaders will want to fill their development tool kit with fundamental concepts and strategies.



A NEW LEARNING LEADER’S first priority must be to have a vision for the quality and impact of professional learning. While my colleague had seen Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011) listed on posters, she had never thought about what they meant for planning and implementing professional learning in her school system. Now she needed to think about them on a larger scale.”

— *Stephanie Hirsh, p. 68*



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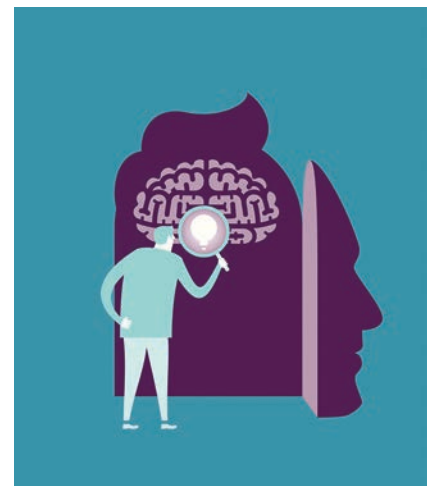
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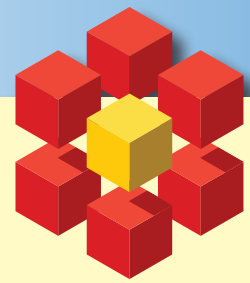
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advice

FROM LEARNING PROFESSIONALS

We asked Learning Forward members around the country for the counsel they'd like to give to new learning leaders.

“It is OK to make mistakes as long as you are willing to learn and grow from them.”

Joseph McFarland

Superintendent
Derry Township (Pennsylvania)
School District

JSD: What do you wish you had known when you first began your journey as a learning leader?



McFarland: I wish I had a better understanding of the change process (theory of change). I also wish I had learned how to handle trying to “drink from a fire

hose” and managing the multiple issues that arise on a daily basis while working to keep everyone laser-focused on our specific goals.

JSD: What is the one crucial piece of advice you would give to those just starting out in the professional learning world?

McFarland: Give yourself time to get established, read, learn, and network. Any significant, systemic change takes at least three to five years of focused, dedicated work. Change

doesn't need to happen in the artificial structure of a given school year. (In fact, it won't!) Also, be real and vulnerable. It is OK to make mistakes as long as you are willing to learn and grow from them.

JSD: What fundamental resource do you find yourself going back to often, and therefore you would be quickest to recommend (and why)?

McFarland: *Becoming a Learning System* by Stephanie Hirsh, Kay Psencik, and Frederick Brown (Learning Forward, 2014) and *Assessing Impact* by Joellen Killion (Corwin & NSDC, 2008). Both have been incredibly helpful, practical resources for developing, implementing, and assessing the impact of systemic change.

JSD: What have we not asked that you would most like to say to beginning learning leaders?

McFarland: Never be satisfied with the status quo. Even if you have evidence something is working, always be open to at least reviewing and analyzing to see if it can be made even better/stronger. ■

MORE
“I wish I had known”

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p. 13

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Fundamentals make a difference at every skill level

If I were to map my trajectory as a cook, plotting the growth of my ability to put a decent meal together, the line would be all over the place.

I didn't plan to learn a few fundamental dishes first and then build expertise in a logical fashion. When I read stories about the development of skilled cooks, I wonder why I didn't master the poached egg years ago.

Looking back, I realize that the people I was with and the context of my life gave me opportunities to try different things at different times, learning as I went. And now, after years of cooking, I have enough accumulated knowledge to put together a variety of dishes without intensive study or preparation.

When I stumble mid-recipe, my reaction is different than it was years ago. Then, I would have barreled ahead in confusion, following along as best I could, and sometimes chance upon a decent outcome (and sometimes not). Now, I use my foundational knowledge about how ingredients, heat, and time come together to decide a next step.

As with my development as a cook, those who come to professional learning leadership often don't find themselves following a logical road map to become skilled in their craft.

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



Thanks to opportunity, they may need to develop a particular set of skills early on. Eventually, their knowledge and skills deepen, and they have expertise to draw on in many situations.

Yet no matter how skilled and experienced learning leaders are, consider why it's important to keep turning to the fundamentals:

1. **With experience, we see fundamental information through entirely new lenses.** It is one thing to study the Concerns-Based Adoption Model as you think about addressing the challenge of change. It's quite another when you have worked with real people who exemplify the various concepts you've studied. Returning to that foundational knowledge with such experience allows you to understand it more deeply and apply it again in new ways.
2. **Sometimes we need reminders about what is foundational.** When

we have opportunities to develop certain expertise, our focus can become more precise and narrow as we go deeper. Yet even those who know every detail about the creation and implementation of microcredentials, for example, will still need general knowledge about adult learning for their work to be effective.

3. **The longer we work as knowledgeable experts in a field, the more we will encounter upcoming learning leaders.** As educators, we have a responsibility to help professional learning novices develop a solid, well-rounded base on which to build for the future.
4. **We may find ourselves in the position of the equivalent of not knowing how to poach an egg.** For example, maybe a central office leader is an experienced literacy coach and instructional leader yet never facilitated a group of peers. That leader may need to learn some basics about agenda, norm setting, and group decision making. While we don't cover all the basics in this issue of *JSD*, we do highlight concepts that have been bedrock learning for several educators. As Learning Forward members, you have access to years of such resources, including those that explore the Standards for Professional Learning, the most foundational of all professional learning essentials. ■



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Artwork provided by local artist Roy Henry Vickers.



FACEBOOK SUPPORT

Teacher Peer Support in Social Network Sites

Teaching and Teacher Education,
May 2016

What kind of support can teachers find on Facebook? This paper describes six ways in which teachers support one another in online groups. As noted by co-author Nick Kelly, "In a review of existing online communities, it appears that certain conditions are needed for teachers to be willing to engage in the most important of these roles: modeling practice, supporting reflection, and providing feedback. Such a connection appears to have preconditions of a trusted environment with stable relationships and a sense of privacy." The authors present evidence from a study of a large, open group of teachers online over a 12-week period, repeated with multiple groups a year later over a one-week period. The findings suggest that large open groups on social network sites can be a useful source of pragmatic advice for teachers but that these groups are rarely a place for reflection on or feedback about teaching practice.

www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0742051X16300336

TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM

Supporting Teacher

Professionalism:

Insights from TALIS 2013

OECD, 2016

This report examines the nature and extent of support for teacher professionalism using the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2013, a survey of teachers and principals in 34 countries and economies around the world. Teacher professionalism is defined as the knowledge, skills, and practices that teachers must have to be effective educators. The report focuses on lower secondary teachers in different education systems and looks at cross-cultural differences in teacher professionalism. It explores how teacher professionalism is linked to outcomes such as perceived status, satisfaction with profession and school environment, or perceived self-efficacy.

The publication also tackles equity concerns by examining professionalism support gaps between high- and low-poverty schools. The report includes policy recommendations to enhance teacher professionalism and equity in access to high-quality teaching in OECD member countries.

www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/supporting-teacher-professionalism_9789264248601-en#page1

POLICY CHECK-UP

Support From the Start:

A 50-State Review on New Educator Induction and Mentoring

New Teacher Center, March 2016

New Teacher Center has monitored state policies around support for new teachers and school principals since 2011. Its latest

report — updated for the 2015-16 school year — takes stock of policy changes over the past five years and summarizes what actions states have taken to strengthen on-the-job support for beginning educators. The paper finds that states have made only limited progress in that time. Among its findings: Only three states (Connecticut, Delaware, and Iowa) meet New Teacher Center's most important criteria for a high-quality system of new teacher support; of the 29 states that now require some type of support for new teachers, barely half (15 states) require support in teachers' first and second years; and only 16 states provide some dedicated funding for teacher induction — one fewer than in 2012. The report says some states are taking baby steps toward better policies. A handful of states, for example, have taken clear steps forward in improving multiple areas of state policy that can lead to greater support for new teachers and principals. Several states have also made progress in specific areas of new educator induction.

<https://newteachercenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016ExecSummaryStatePolicies.pdf>



LEADING THE WAY**Great to Influential: Teacher Leaders' Roles in Supporting Instruction**
National Network of State Teachers of the Year, March 2016

Following up on its first study, the National Network of State Teachers of the Year talked to State Teachers of the Year to better understand why teacher leaders and teacher leadership opportunities play such an important role in developing teachers' effectiveness. The organization wanted to know: What role did teacher leadership play in improving these teachers' effectiveness across the career continuum? And what do these teachers perceive as the major supports and barriers to teacher leadership? In exploring the specific ways in which teacher leaders can contribute to instructional improvement, the National Network of State Teachers of the Year adds to the growing body of research that suggests teacher leaders may play a critical role in creating high-functioning schools that can create sustainable improvements in teaching and learning.

www.nnstoy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/15-4132-GTL-NNSTOY-GreatToInfluential-03288-004-04-1k-FNL4-002-FINAL.pdf

MAPPING KNOWLEDGE**The Digital Promise Research Map**
Digital Promise, 2016

Digital Promise, a nonprofit organization authorized by Congress to spur innovation in education, has created an online resource designed to connect education leaders and product developers with research from thousands of articles in education and the learning sciences. The Digital Promise Research Map is designed to help make research more accessible for everyday work

in education. The map organizes thousands of education articles in a way that makes it easier for users to uncover research findings that can strengthen their work — and, its authors suggest, “ultimately improve student learning.” The hope is that when designing a program or product, education leaders and education technology developers can use the Digital Promise Research Map to find the best knowledge available on how students learn.

<http://researchmap.digitalpromise.org>

**ONLINE LEARNING****Sanford Inspire Program**

The Sanford Inspire Program leverages the resources of Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (Arizona State University) to create on-demand online modules that are research-based professional development for teachers. These self-guided, free online courses target content in five domains: learning environment, planning and delivery, motivation, student growth and achievement, and professional practices. Each course can be completed in 60 minutes or less and includes a tool that teachers can implement in the classroom immediately. Upon successful completion, teachers earn a certificate documenting professional development hours earned.

<http://sanfordinspireprogram.org/teachers>

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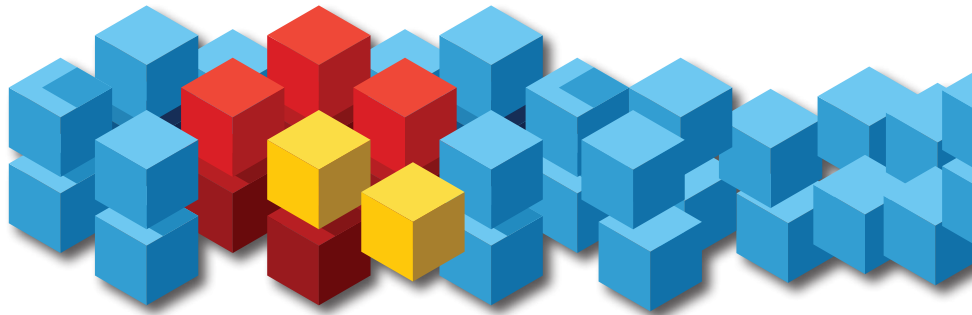
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TYPES OF COACHING

Coaching is one of the most fundamental types of professional learning. But what do we mean by the broad term “coaching”? Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison describe different types of coaching, each with a distinct focus or purpose. These include:

- **Challenge coaching:** Coaches support individuals or teams of teachers in addressing persistent problems in their instruction.
- **Cognitive Coaching:** Coaches engage in conversations with teachers about planning, reflecting, and problem solving with the intent of building autonomy and interdependence.
- **Collegial coaching:** Coaches work as peers with individuals or teacher teams to strengthen their collegiality, collaborative skills, and instructional practice.
- **Content-focused coaching:** Coaches focus their interactions with teachers on content-specific instruction, planning and assessment curriculum, content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge.
- **Instructional coaching:** Coaches interact with teachers on all aspects of instruction, including planning, assessing learning, and differentiating to meet learners’ needs.
- **Mentoring:** Coaches focus on supporting novice teachers to build their instructional expertise and support their acclimation to their school.
- **Peer coaching:** Teachers provide coaching support to one another, typically focused on a new area of learning, in a collegial, nonevaluative relationship to advance their individual expertise with the learning.

Source: Killion, J. & Harrison C. (2006). *Taking the lead: New roles for teachers and school-based coaches*. Oxford, OH: NSDC.



THE EMPHASIS IS ON EFFECTIVE

Professional learning, often called professional development, can occur in a formal setting, such as a conference, workshop, or seminar, or in an informal context, such as discussions among colleagues, independent reading and research, observing a colleague’s work, or learning from a peer. (See “Beyond the workshop” on p. 54.)

Student learning and achievement increase when educators engage in effective professional development focused on the skills educators need in order to address students’ major learning challenges.

Before we take a deep dive on this issue’s theme, “Fundamentals,” it’s important to understand what effective professional learning is and what it looks like.

1 WHAT IS EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING?

Effective professional learning enables educators to develop the knowledge and skills they need to address students’ learning challenges. To be effective, professional learning requires thoughtful planning followed by careful implementation with feedback to ensure it responds to educators’ learning needs.

Educators who participate in professional development then must put their new knowledge and skills to work. Professional learning is not effective unless it causes teachers to improve their instruction or causes administrators to become better school leaders.

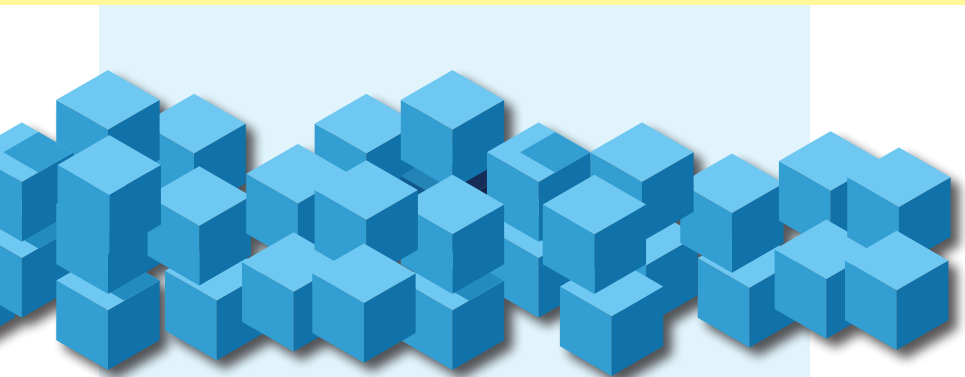
Source: Adapted from Mizell, H. (2010). *Why professional development matters*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

2 HOW DO EDUCATORS MAKE SURE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IS EFFECTIVE?

The effectiveness depends on how carefully educators conceive, plan, and implement it. There is no substitute for rigorous thinking and execution. Unfortunately, many educators responsible for organizing professional development have had no formal education in how to do so. The learning experiences they create for others are similar to their own experiences, many of which were neither positive nor effective.

3 WHAT DOES EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING LOOK LIKE?

In effective professional learning, a leadership team analyzes student achievement data to identify learning problems common to students in a particular grade or class, determines



HOW TO SET A LEARNING AGENDA

To determine a focus for learning and action, ask these four crucial questions in order:

- What does an analysis of student achievement data reveal about students’ major learning problems?
- Which student learning problems are most educators not addressing effectively?
- What knowledge and skills do educators need to learn to more effectively address the identified student learning problems?
- What is the content and duration of professional development required for educators to learn the knowledge and skills they will use to more effectively address the student learning problems?

which problems educators have the most difficulty addressing, and investigates what they need to know and do to be more successful in helping students overcome learning challenges.

Next, all educators are organized into learning teams. Many educators serve on more than one learning team. Each team has a skilled facilitator to guide the team in establishing and pursuing learning goals. Teams meet during the workday at their school two or three times a week. Districtwide teams are sometimes organized by grade or subject to focus on systemic matters.

In team learning, less experienced educators interact with and learn from more experienced educators on the team. As all educators on the team become more skillful, they reduce or eliminate variations in performance and begin to take collective responsibility for the success of all students, rather than just their own.

4 WHAT IS A LEARNING TEAM?

On a learning team, teachers and school leaders work together to use data to understand what students are not learning and to find instructional gaps, then determine what they need to learn to help close those gaps.

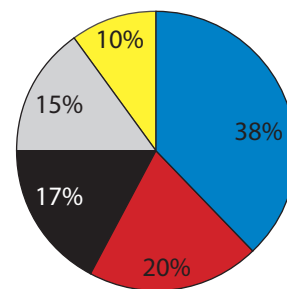
Learning team members next set out to learn what they need to know and do to improve. They may work with a knowledgeable person from the school system’s central office, with a successful teacher within the school or from another school, with an expert from a local college/university or education service center, or with a consultant.

Team members also might engage in self-directed learning such as conducting research, observing effective instruction perhaps at another school, or attending a conference or workshop. The team allows time, likely over the course of many weeks, to make sure educators’ learning is intensive. They engage in an ongoing cycle of improvement.

IN THIS ISSUE OF JSD	
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LEARNING LEADERS COME FROM EVERYWHERE

As an example of how learning leaders can be found in every area of education, here is a breakdown of Learning Forward members’ roles.



- District, central office
- External, technical assistance provider, organization
- Teacher, teacher leader, coach
- Principal, assistant principal
- None specified

LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR GREAT TEACHING AND LEARNING

By Eric Celeste

With rare exception, leaders are made, not born. That's because "leadership potential is not something that some people have and other people don't," note authors James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner (2016). "It's more broadly distributed than traditionally accepted views suggest."

Everyone has the capacity to lead, they say, but not until a leadership foundation is laid: "To become an exemplary leader, you have to ... [apply] the fundamentals that will enable you to learn and grow as a leader" (Kouzes & Posner, 2016).

That's what we set out to do with this issue of *JSD*: Give learning leaders — prospective, new, and longtime — a broad sample of the fundamental concepts and strategies they must have in their development tool kit. We want this to be a go-to resource whether you're building your skill set or you need a refresher after decades in the professional learning field.

In this issue, we explore what we mean when we say "learn-

ing leader." To do this, we asked ourselves, "What is professional learning leadership at its core?"

Let's start with the definition of leadership from Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning:

Leadership: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning (Learning Forward, 2011).

That's the quality we want to build, but we want to go deeper to understand: Who are you, where do you work, and what type of work do you do? Why is your understanding of these fundamentals so important? Why are learning leaders necessary to education professionals and the students who benefit from their expertise?

MANY ROLES, MANY PLACES

Leaders of professional learning come to their responsibility from many roles, from teacher to district administrator to instructional coach. They can be found doing their work at the classroom, school, and system levels. They set the agenda for professional learning by aligning it to classroom, school, and school system goals for student and educator learning, using



data to monitor and measure its effects on educator and student performance. They may facilitate professional learning, coach and supervise those who facilitate it, or do both.

As facilitators of professional learning, they apply a body of technical knowledge and skills to plan, design, implement, and evaluate professional learning. As coaches and supervisors of those who facilitate professional learning, they develop expertise in others about effective professional learning, set high standards for their performance, and use data to give frequent, constructive feedback.

Teacher leaders are vital to establishing a collaborative school culture that fosters continuous improvement of teaching and student achievement. Teacher leaders model, facilitate, advocate for, and support ongoing professional learning within schools.

Research has shown that teaching quality and school leadership are the most important school-based factors in raising student achievement. For teachers and school and district leaders to be as effective as possible, they continually expand their knowledge and skills to implement the best educational practices. Educators learn to help students learn at the highest levels.

Many people may not be aware of their local school system's methods for improving teaching and student learning. Professional development is the only strategy school systems have to strengthen educators' performance levels. Professional development is also the only way educators can learn so that they are able to better their performance and raise student achievement.

As Thomas Guskey (2000, p. 4) states, "One constant finding in the research literature is that notable improvements in education almost never take place in the absence of professional development." Professional development is key to meeting today's educational demands, and you are the agent of change for systems, schools, and people charged with improving student outcomes.

"It's important to note that this is not just about providing professional development but about providing *effective* professional development," notes the Center for Public Education's 2013 report *Teaching the Teachers*. "Availability alone is not an issue. In fact, in a recent study, researchers found that, while 90% of teachers reported participating in professional development, most of those teachers also reported that it was totally useless (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

"Thus, the real issue isn't that teachers aren't provided professional development, but that the typical offerings are ineffective at changing teachers' practice or student learning. ... The real challenge schools face is how to create opportunities for

teachers to grow and develop in their practice so that they, in turn, can help students grow and develop their knowledge and ability to think critically" (Gulamhussein, 2013).

FOCUS ON TEACHER LEADERS

Learning Forward's focus on teacher leadership began in 2004 with the advent of its first national academy for school-based staff developers, as they were called then. Over the last seven years, Learning Forward's support of teacher leaders has focused more on teachers who support their colleagues by serving in one or more of many roles with one of many diverse job titles.

Whether as coaches, instructional facilitators, teacher leaders, or school-based staff developers, highly dedicated and well-prepared teacher leaders work in these roles. They choose to make a difference beyond their classroom, some while remaining in their classrooms full- or part-time, and others who leave their role of classroom teacher to serve in one of these new teacher leadership roles.

No matter which role you serve, we hope these articles will help you build a foundation for your work that will remain rock-solid for years to come.

We don't consider this issue to be an exhaustive list of the fundamental aspects of professional learning leadership. The articles we've included here give everyone a sample of the critical aspects of the craft that are essential to growing your leadership capacity. We hope that, for this reason, you'll come back to this issue often as you strive to become the best leader you can be.

REFERENCES

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“ Professional learning needs to allow teachers to inquire, be curious, explore, and grow in their practice.”

Maria Warren

K-4/RTI supervisor
Loudon County (Tennessee)
School District

JSD: What do you wish you had known when you first began your journey as a learning leader?



Warren: I wish that I had known the importance of establishing priority and balance. In doing this, I feel that I would have had a more purposeful focus of needs at the

beginning of my journey. I tried to have my hand in many pots and felt that I had to know everything that was going on in my school. Balance of learning, understanding routines, district initiatives, faculty strengths/weaknesses, students, parents, community, and overall responsibilities, oh my!

I felt that if I didn't know all about the ins and outs of school, teachers would be frustrated with me when I couldn't answer their questions. I later reflected that I had a width of knowledge, but lacked the needed depth that could have strengthened particular areas of need. I wish that I had established a priority list with my

leadership team that, in turn, would have helped me to build depth in the area of priority — a focused plan that could be outlined, modified, and restructured throughout the year.

JSD: What is the one crucial piece of advice you would give to those just starting out in the professional learning world?

Warren: Determine needs, involve stakeholders, map out a plan, share expectations that are realistic and purposeful, then measure to determine effectiveness. Remember to differentiate just as we would differentiate in the classroom. The more that you include stakeholders, the more buy-in that you will have and the more that the stakeholders will feel that they are heard and their input is valued.

Create a large-scale graphic organizer (a month-to-month plan, like a to-do list) with the district-level team and post in the office to help the team stay on track. This way everyone knows the expectations, time frame of completion, and responsibilities of stakeholders.

JSD: What fundamental resource do you find yourself going back to often, and therefore you would be quickest to recommend (and why)?

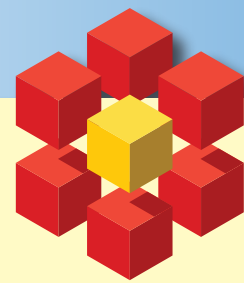
Warren: The practices that I used

when I was in the classroom. As a teacher, I was always looking for new and innovative ways to capture my students' attention and measure the effectiveness of my lessons. I wanted to provide all my students with opportunities to inquire, be curious, and explore. I also needed my lessons to be relevant and connect with other powerful ideas.

The same applies in the professional learning world. Professional learning needs to allow teachers to inquire, be curious, explore, and grow in their practice. The learning also needs to be relevant and be able to connect the needs of the learner. Teachers assess through each lesson, the same needs to hold true on professional learning. ... This year, we will run all of our professional learning (district- and schoolwide) through a rubric to ensure consistency and relevancy.

JSD: What have we not asked that you would most like to say to beginning learning leaders?

Warren: Collaboration, planning, and measurement are key. You can build a professional learning program, but its effectiveness will be determined through focused planning, feedback, and measurement of effectiveness. ■



advice FROM LEARNING PROFESSIONALS

We asked Learning Forward members around the country for the counsel they'd like to give to new learning leaders.



THE SANDWICH STRATEGY

NO MATTER HOW YOU SLICE IT, ANALYZING STUDENT WORK TOGETHER IMPROVES MATH INSTRUCTION

By Lynsey K. Gibbons, Rebecca M. Lewis, and Lisa Nguyen Batista

Teachers are regularly asked to use data to inform their instruction. In the past, teachers examined student work in isolation (Little, Gearhart, Curry, & Kafka, 2003). Now, however, teachers increasingly have dedicated meeting times. So how can teachers collaboratively examine student work and use their findings

to improve instruction?

A team of teachers at Hilltop Elementary School in the Pacific Northwest demonstrates the power of collaborative analysis of student work as teachers and school leaders use student work to guide their instructional decisions and support their professional learning about teaching mathematics.

Hilltop Elementary is an urban school that serves an



GRADE 3 COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR FRACTIONS

3.NF.1: Understand a fraction $1/b$ as the quantity formed by 1 part when a whole is partitioned into b equal parts; understand a fraction a/b as the quantity formed by a parts of size $1/b$.

3.NF.2: Understand a fraction as a number on the number line; represent fractions on a number line diagram.

3.NF.3: Explain equivalence of fractions in special cases, and compare fractions by reasoning about their size.

Source: www.corestandards.org/Math/Content/3/NF.

ethnically and linguistically diverse population, as well as high poverty and mobility rates. Over 50% of the student population speaks a language other than English at home.

Teachers and school leaders at Hilltop hold a deep commitment to knowing each student and creating classroom communities that provide rich learning opportunities. Part of their collective vision for mathematics instruction is to listen carefully to how students are thinking and use those observations to make instructional decisions that support students to advance their ideas.

In the following vignette, we examine the types of conversation that take place while teachers and school leaders collectively examine student work to inform instruction.

Tara Lee, the mathematics coach, is facilitating the work of the team of three 3rd-grade teachers, an English language learners specialist who supports 3rd graders in their classrooms, and the principal as the group examines a formative assessment task, considers students' current thinking against the Grade 3 Common Core State Standards for Fractions (see above), and discusses the implications for their upcoming fractions unit.

All of the teachers bring student work from a task they had used and interviewed their students about the previous week (see examples on p. 16). The task asked students to determine how six students can share eight sandwiches equally. The group breaks into smaller groups to look across the student work, 67 pieces in all.

As you examine the student work, notice how students partitioned the sandwiches and answered how many sandwiches an individual child receives — both their written notation and what they said, which was recorded by the teacher off to the side using quotation marks.

Lee: Now that we've looked at the standards, let's take a few minutes to look at the student work from last week's formative assessment. As you look through the work with a partner, pay attention to how students partitioned the sandwiches, their use of fraction language, and their use of fraction notation.

As the two small groups analyze the student work, Lee spends time with each. In one group, Ana Seiw, the English language specialist, has joined two 3rd-grade teachers, Christine Clint and Aretta Wilson.

Clint: Look how many kids were able to partition and share the sandwiches fairly. I wasn't expecting that.

Wilson: That surprises me, too, and they aren't all partitioned the same way. For example, Franklin split all the sandwiches into sixths and Marisol split all the sandwiches into thirds.

Seiw: And a few kids, like Abdi and Abna, shared whole sandwiches first and then partitioned only the two that are leftover. What did these kids do last year in 2nd grade with fractions?

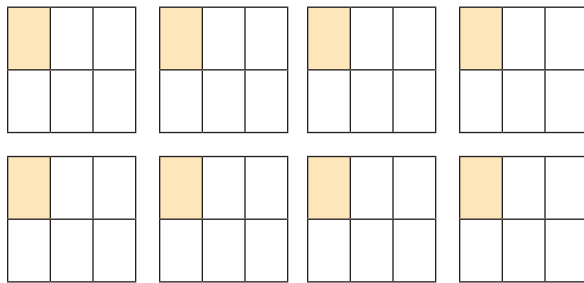
Lee: They had lots of opportunities to partition both circles and rectangles. It's part of the 2nd-grade geometry standards.

In the other group, principal Julie Richards and 3rd-grade teacher John Soren flip through the same set of student work.

Richards: This is interesting. There are a handful of students who seem to use the term "half" to name any piece that's smaller than a whole.

Soren: I noticed that, too. And some kids don't use any fractional language at all. Franklin and Marisol both count up the number of pieces, regardless of their

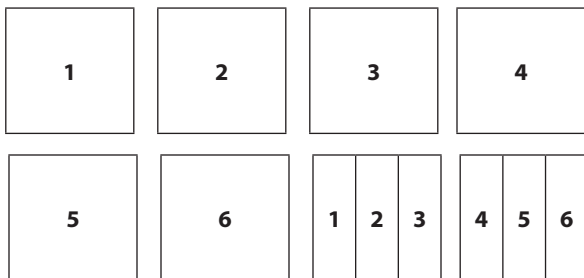
6 children are sharing 8 sandwiches



FRANKLIN'S WORK

NAME: Franklin

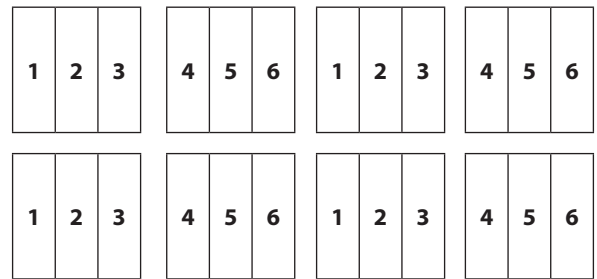
6 children are sharing 8 small sandwiches.
They are sharing so each child gets the same amount.
How many sandwiches will one child get? 8 sandwiches



ABDI'S WORK

NAME: Abdi

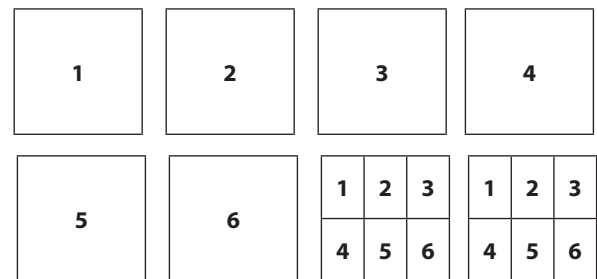
6 children are sharing 8 small sandwiches.
They are sharing so each child gets the same amount.
How many sandwiches will one child get? 1/2 and 1/2 ("a whole and a half")



MARISOL'S WORK

NAME: Marisol

6 children are sharing 8 small sandwiches.
They are sharing so each child gets the same amount.
How many sandwiches will one child get? 4 ("4 pieces")



ABNA'S WORK

NAME: Abna

6 children are sharing 8 small sandwiches.
They are sharing so each child gets the same amount.
How many sandwiches will one child get? 1/2 sixths ("one and two sixths")



size, but they use different labels for their answers. Marisol calls them pieces, and Franklin refers to the whole sandwich.

Richards: It also seems like writing the fraction is tricky. Abdi represented his ideas with notation, whereas others, like Abna, can say the fraction name, but they aren't sure how to write it using symbolic notation.

Lee brings the whole group back together and asks, "What did you notice?" She records their comments on chart paper (see p. 17). Before asking teachers to consider instructional implications, Lee introduces a short reading from mathematics education research about fraction terminology and symbolic notation (Empson & Levi, 2011, pp. 24-26).

Based on her knowledge and experience of students' reason-

ing in fractions, Lee had anticipated that these ideas would be important for teachers to consider. The group's conversation about the reading proceeds.

Soren: Reading this feels reassuring about where our students are at currently. Like the part about many kids overgeneralizing "half" because fraction terminology isn't intuitive.

Wilson: I was surprised to read the recommendation about waiting to introduce symbolic notation, but it makes sense. Notation can be one of the hardest things for kids to learn about fractions.

Seiw: I was surprised by the recommendation to focus on the size of the part relative to the whole, like describing something as a one-eighth size piece rather than one out

TEACHERS' ANALYSIS OF STUDENT WORK

WHAT WE NOTICED	INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS	WE COMMIT TO ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most students can partition and fair share (in lots of ways). • The term "half" is overused. • Some students don't use fractional language at all. • Symbolic notation is challenging. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students: "How many of these parts fit into the whole (sandwich)?" to reinforce relationship between size of piece and whole. • Use language such as "sixths-sized pieces." • Introduce "word notation" first (e.g. "three-eighths"); then introduce symbolic notation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning the unit with five days of sharing problems plus daily whole group discussion. • Lee joining each class for one or more day(s) of sharing problems. • Bringing to PLC the following week: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tracking student understanding on clipboard; and - A common (across classes) exit ticket every Wednesday.

of eight. It seems like we should think about how to be consistent with our questions and our language in order to make the meaning more explicit.

Richards: I agree. What language can we all agree to use across all of our classrooms?

Lee: Yes, and I'm also wondering how we can support students in moving toward using accurate symbolic notation for fractions.

Having collectively identified fractional language and symbolic notations as goals for student learning, Lee asks the group to consider implications for their instruction. The teachers draw on their experiences and the suggestions from the reading. In the final few minutes of the meeting, Lee asks the group, "What commitments do we want to make as we begin our fractions unit?" They make decisions related to task selection, coach support, and data collection (see above).

In this collaborative meeting, the teachers examined student work that was generated from an equal sharing problem posed to students *before* the beginning of their fractions unit. This preassessment item, along with the one-on-one conversations that teachers had with students about the item, allowed teachers to gather information about students' current understanding of the meaning of fractions, which then informed their unit planning in response to the data.

The student work and teachers' notes provided opportunities for teachers to explore how students were partitioning, as evidenced by the ways in which they "cut" the sandwiches (e.g. in thirds or sixths), their use of fraction language (e.g. "pieces," "one-third," or "two-sixths"), and the symbolic notation they used to represent their fraction (e.g. $1\frac{1}{3}$ or $8/6$).

The teachers found, as they looked across all the 3rd graders, that a majority of students were able to partition and share fairly but were uncertain about how to name the fraction using words and symbolic notation. Following the analysis of the student work, the coach supported teachers to identify a common language for supporting students to name fractions and use symbolic notation during instruction.

Teachers also considered the kinds of instructional activities to use and discussed potential common formative assessments to evaluate the progression of students' understanding and strategies across the unit.

Later, two weeks into their fractions unit at another teacher collaborative meeting, the group reflected on the decisions they had made based on their analysis of student work. Here is a summary of the conversation that took place after Lee asked, "How is your fractions instruction going? What have we learned about teaching fractions?"

Soren: Starting with the equal sharing problems was really powerful. I was able to monitor students' progress regularly with regard to their partitioning strategies and their use of fraction language and symbolic notation.

Clint: I felt that the whole-group discussions I had with my class were really important. I was so glad that we spent time agreeing on the language we wanted to use in our classrooms. At first, the language felt awkward, but with practice, it felt more natural for me and the kids.

Wilson: I was a little nervous about delaying the symbolic notation as we had agreed to try when we first talked about it. But I am noticing that my students this year are using symbolic notation with more accuracy than in the past.

Here, teachers reported how their instruction changed as a result of their examination of student work, discussions with one another, and commitments to try new instructional strategies. Let's consider the conditions that can lead to productive collaborative discussions, particularly around examining student work, including school leaders' roles in supporting such discussions.

1. The quality of student work matters.

High-quality instruction includes teaching in response to students' current thinking. Teachers need to understand the content that students need to learn and how it develops along learning progressions (NCTM, 2014). As we saw in the vignette, examining student work can be a primary activity to

support teachers to learn about how students’ understanding of particular disciplinary ideas develop over time (Carpenter, Fennema, & Franke, 1996).

The type of student work collected is important to consider. Many standardized and curriculum-embedded assessments simply indicate whether students got answers correct, but they do not help teachers understand what students think as they solve problems or what approaches they take (Lewis, Gibbons, Kazemi, & Lind, 2015).

Knowing *how* students arrive at their answers can help teachers make informed decisions to improve learning opportunities for students. Formative assessment tasks that are designed for teachers to confer with students about their thinking, such as the one on p. 16, are needed to help teachers learn about how students are reasoning. Talking with students about their strategy use can lead to more accurate interpretations and data on which to base decisions.

2. Examine student work collectively.

Certain conditions can be established to support teachers’ collective examination of student work. It is essential that ongoing time be set aside to ensure that teachers come together to learn. At Hilltop, teachers’ schedules were aligned so that they could meet twice a week—once to talk about mathematics instruction and another to talk about literacy instruction.

Examining student work collectively can also support the learning of educators across the organization. Common experiences enable successful collaborative discussions. When examining student work, teachers at Hilltop have benefited from giving the same formative assessment tasks to their students. By examining the same task given to all students across the grade level, teachers collectively deepen their understanding of how

students reason about a particular idea.

As a result, they commit to trying out particular instructional activities with students, supporting each other to develop new practices. While teachers are responsive to students’ needs, they try to stay on a similar pace with instruction so they can have ongoing conversations about their teaching and student learning. The school community is continually striving to improve mathematics instruction to strengthen student learning.

3. School leaders’ participation is essential.

The principal has a critical role at the weekly collaborative meetings at Hilltop, working with teachers to analyze student work, understand student learning progressions, and participate with teachers to consider modifications to instruction.

Participating as a learner is important because principals

Effective facilitation also means assisting teachers with connecting what they are uncovering about students’ thinking with their instructional practices.

are instructional leaders who are often asked to provide teachers feedback about their instruction. During the collaborative meetings, principals also have a role in monitoring what teachers are learning and pressing them to take up the agreed-upon instructional strategies. We see this in the above vignette, when the principal presses teachers to consider what they will commit to do across all of their classrooms.

4. Effective coaching supports teacher learning.

An experienced instructional coach leads each collaborative meeting. At Hilltop, the math coach has built strong relationships of trust with her staff and engaged in learning opportunities to develop her own skills of facilitating adult learning.

In the vignette, we saw how the coach supported teachers’ examination of student work and their subsequent conversations. She had particular goals for the teachers’ learning and thus guided their attention toward particular aspects of the student work.

For example, as teachers began to look at the task, Lee asked teachers to “pay attention to students’ partitioning strategies, their fraction language, and their use of notation.” Consistently, the coach pressed teachers to consider what students did to solve the problem, why they solved it in particular ways, and what their strategies revealed about their understanding of fractions.

Another important aspect of the coach’s work is to support teachers’ learning by bringing in research on children’s thinking and pedagogy. The coach asked teachers to review a reading authored by mathematics education researchers. In doing so, she supported teachers to learn about new forms of instruction, such as the instructional sequence for supporting students to learn fraction symbolic notation.

Effective facilitation also means assisting teachers with connecting what they are uncovering about students’ thinking with their instructional practices. We saw this, in part, when she pressed teachers to consider instructional implications based on what they had learned from examining the formative assessment task.

Finally, the coach has an important role in helping teachers as they implement the agreed-upon instructional strategies in their classrooms. The coach provides valuable follow-up support through providing follow-up communication and resources regarding what teachers commit to do in their classrooms, and providing in-classroom support such as co-teaching as teachers implement equal sharing problems.

Continued on p. 37

Examining student work collectively can also support the learning of educators across the organization. Common experiences enable successful collaborative discussions.

“It’s not about the wisdom you bring to the group, but the wisdom *within the group* that you unlock so that they can become learning leaders for themselves.”

Dale Hair

Senior consultant
Affiliate coordinator/coach
Learning Forward

JSD: What do you wish you had known when you first began your journey as a learning leader?



Hair: It’s not about the wisdom *you* bring to the group, but the wisdom *within the group* that you unlock so that they can become learning leaders for themselves.

JSD: What is the one crucial piece of advice you would give to those just

starting out in the professional learning world?

Hair: If at all possible, sign up for the Learning Forward Academy when you first become a learning leader. This experience will do more to help you gain the firsthand knowledge you need and to connect you with a group of like-minded leaders who will serve as professional colleagues throughout your career.

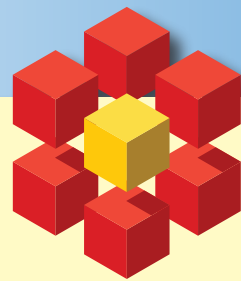
JSD: What fundamental resource do you find yourself going back to often, and therefore you would be quickest to recommend (and why)?

Hair: The Ford Middle School video (www.youtube.com/watch?v=aM4ExyARNNQ) is perfect for showing others what is meant

by a learning community. The case studies in *A Playbook for Professional Learning* by Stephanie Hirsh and Shirley Hord (Learning Forward, 2012) are invaluable when used as a jigsaw activity to build an understanding of the standards in a practical setting.

JSD: What have we not asked that you would most like to say to beginning learning leaders?

Hair: Sometimes others may not value the important role that professional learning plays in improving teaching and student learning. You will need to be a lifetime advocate and passionate purveyor of evidence that demonstrates that value. ■



advice FROM LEARNING PROFESSIONALS

We asked Learning Forward members around the country for the counsel they’d like to give to new learning leaders.

EXPANDING

TEACHERS CROSS DISTRICT LINES TO LEARN WITH PEERS

By Ben Owens and David Strahan

On the day her colleague Kathy Gray came to observe a lesson, Kimberly Worley was introducing an idea for projects to her 10th-grade biology students. Noticing students' lack of enthusiasm, she closed her slides and asked them for suggestions. "Today is a good day for the team leaders to lead the discussion," she said, "so I will step aside."

Three students moved to the front of the room. One asked, "OK, folks, how can we study plant cells and make our project more interesting?" Over the next 20 minutes, the students brainstormed ideas, finally deciding to base their inquiry on the novel *The Maze Runner*, which they had read the year before. They planned a project that would enable them to describe the cells that constitute a cornstalk and then create models of the cells to present to another biology class whose students would design a similar project for animal cells.

When Gray and Worley debriefed on the lesson, they were both impressed with the level of student engagement and the way the group bought in to the project idea. Later, Worley said, "I still wasn't sure what I was doing, but I had just recently learned to let go of the reins and just get a

taste of what a true facilitator is. That day, Kathy and I both witnessed a student-led classroom. I had not seen much of that up until that point because I hadn't allowed it."

HOW THE PROJECT BEGAN

This vignette demonstrates some of the outcomes that occur when teachers collaborate across school district lines. As participants in the Scaling the Pockets of Teaching Excellence project, Worley and Gray met for a weekend work session, corresponded for over a month, arranged visits to each other's classrooms, and then focused on ways to infuse more student-centered problem- and project-based learning into their lessons.

The project began as an idea from Ben Owens, a 2014 Hope Street Group National Teacher Fellow. The basic notion was that good teaching doesn't happen in isolation. As someone who came into teaching after a career in engineering, Owens knew the power of collaboration and its importance to the bottom line in business. Seeing a stark contrast in education, where many teachers work in isolation, he realized there must be a simpler way to identify teachers interested in growing professionally by working with peers in other schools or districts.

The resulting proposal featured a process for recruiting interested teachers from neighboring districts who would work in pairs to "expand pockets of teaching excellence."



EXCELLENCE

To keep costs low, the proposal structured partnerships so that one partner could travel from one school to the other within an hour. Owens' proposal specifically targeted teachers who were in the same general content areas and taught students at or near the same grade level.

REDEFINING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Research documents the need for the project. Traditional professional development models are simply not working the way they should. A 2015 report from TNTF titled *The Mirage* states that, despite massive annual investments in teacher training, most teachers simply do not improve. The report urges district leaders to not only redefine what it means to help teachers improve their teaching practices, but also to re-evaluate existing professional learning programs and rethink how to bring effective teaching to scale.

Teachers Know Best: Teachers' Views on Professional Development, a 2014 report from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, found that many professional development offerings were irrelevant, ineffective, or not connected to the core work of helping students learn. The teachers interviewed said that professional learning needs to be more relevant, personalized, sustainable, and delivered by someone with similar experiences.

We also know that educators in the U.S. do not do

enough collaborative professional learning. Kardos and Johnson (2007) found that, despite efforts to address beginning teacher supports, many novice teachers still work in a solitary atmosphere. Data from the OECD's 2013 Teaching and Learning International Survey indicate that 54% of U.S. teachers say they never teach jointly as a team in the same class, compared with 42% of teachers internationally. Likewise, 50% of U.S. teachers say they never observe other teachers' classes and provide feedback (OECD, 2014).

This is not to say that high-quality teacher collaboration is absent in U.S. schools or that systems are not in place to facilitate such interactions. Professional learning networks exist in many schools and provide the framework for educators to routinely share ideas and fulfill their professional growth needs.

But these networks can't be in name only (Killion, 2014). Brianna Crowley (2014) describes a model professional learning network as a "vibrant, ever-changing group of connections to which teachers go to both share and learn." Other highly effective teacher collaboration models include Critical Friends Groups (Bambino, 2002) and lesson study, a methodical practice developed by Japanese teachers to examine and improve each other's teaching practices (Fernandez & Chokshi, 2002).

Could a system of more formalized teacher collabo-

PARTICIPANTS' ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAM QUALITY				
QUESTIONS	RESPONSES			
	Not met at all	Moderately met	Generally met	Absolutely met
One of the project's goals was to provide a framework to identify, validate, and leverage the pockets of teaching excellence so that teachers who are eager to learn and implement innovative approaches in their own classrooms can, through peer-to-peer immersion sessions and intentional follow-up, learn practical, specific, and tangible ways to do so. From your experience, how well do you feel this goal was met? <i>(One respondent skipped this question.)</i>	0	2	4	2
This project's ultimate goal was to show that, through peer-to-peer collaboration, teachers could learn how to implement and refine innovative teaching practices that lead to more effective teaching and learning, thus quickening the pace of individual student success and its impact on the state's economic future. From your experience and perspective from this project, do you feel this goal is valid?	0	3	1	5

ration lead to a more effective model for professional development? In a report for the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, Burns and Darling-Hammond (2015) conclude that actions that support collaboration hold greater promise for teacher quality than any other approach. In the 2014 report, *Making Space: The Value of Teacher Collaboration*, the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy suggests that teacher collaboration is key to creating an environment for teachers to improve their practice.

These and other examples show that when peers collaborate, share ideas, learn together, offer one another critical and constructive feedback, and take a genuine interest in developing each other as professionals, everyone benefits. Instructional quality improves, student outcomes improve, and teacher job satisfaction and self-efficacy increase. These research findings are what Owens used to establish the basis and framework for this project.

LAUNCHING THE PILOT STUDY

Funded by his fellowship grant through Hope Street Group, Owens launched the pilot project in December 2014. Working with administrators and education thought leaders in the region, he recruited an initial cohort of eight middle and secondary teachers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) curricular areas.

The project's overall goal was to provide a creative way to identify, share, and leverage pockets of teaching best practices across an entire region. Four school districts in Western North Carolina participated: Buncombe, Cherokee, McDowell and Swain. Each district provided two teachers and one project coordinator to oversee the work at a local level. Each district also formally agreed to use professional development funding to cover travel costs teachers would incur when visiting their re-

spective partners, as well as substitute teacher costs, if necessary.

Owens modeled his plans for the project on Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011). At the introductory work session in December 2014, participants discussed project goals, shared insights from research on collaboration, and engaged in team building to develop the trusting working relationships needed for fruitful collaboration and exchanges. Participants helped refine the specific logistical details for how the project would unfold in their respective schools and districts. Teachers quickly developed a shared sense of ownership, and the group identified problem- and project-based learning as a primary theme for the collaboration.

Each of the four two-teacher teams created specific interaction plans and a timeline that included at least two full day classroom visits (termed immersion sessions) as well as appropriate follow-up sessions — live or virtual — to validate the findings and formally verify that action items from the immersion sessions were explicitly implemented.

This component, as well as the expectation that teachers would implement what they learned in their classrooms, schools, and districts, is consistent with Learning Forward's Implementation standard and instrumental to ensuring the project would lead to long-term change.

ONE TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

Jessica Stockham, a third-year teacher at McDowell High School in Marion, North Carolina, was paired with Richard James, a first-year teacher at Owen High in Black Mountain, North Carolina. Here are her reflections on her experience:

“My experiences with the project enabled me to form a supportive professional relationship opportunity with a fellow science teacher from a neighboring district. We realized we were

PARTICIPANTS' PERSONAL GOALS	
WHAT WAS YOUR PERSONAL GOAL FOR PARTICIPATION IN THIS PROJECT?	Average rating of accomplishment
Learn new ways to teach difficult information in an interesting, new, hands-on method.	Absolutely met
Gain more confidence in doing out-of-the-box teaching.	Generally met
Help an emerging teacher gain greater teaching success.	Moderately met
Create and implement open-ended problem-solving tasks in my middle school math classes.	Generally met
See teachers move away from traditional practices to deeper methods for teaching and learning.	Absolutely met
Find new ways to be a more effective teacher for my students.	Absolutely met
Gain a better understanding of problem-based learning by teaching it to someone else.	Moderately met
Be involved with teachers in my district.	Not met
Remove obstacles for participating teachers so they would/could do as much as possible with the project.	Absolutely met

both newer to teaching and had a lot of insecurities about our inexperience.

“Over the course of the project, Richard and I became good friends. We would not only talk about the project, but we would talk about our daily teaching and the frustrations we encountered. It was great to have someone in your corner who was impartial and that you could trust. I knew that he supported me and had no other motives.

“Looking back, I am really glad I got to participate in the project. I learned more about problem-based learning and developed several units using that framework. With more practice, my lessons have become more student-centered and inquiry-focused.

“I am also using what I learned in the project to think more specifically about ways to make high school experiences more career- and college-focused for students. I am working on an externship in a local large industry in McDowell County to learn more about the gap between school and the workplace.”

ASSESSING IMPACT

In May 2015, Owens surveyed participating teachers and their central office representatives. Nine of 12 participants responded. Two of the questions asked them to assess the general quality of the program. (See table on p. 22.)

Survey responses suggest that all participants agreed that the project met the goals established and that the goals were valid. The four respondents who were most positive noted:

- “The collaborative effort showed better comprehension of material and learning difficult topics.”
- “Teachers implemented innovative teaching practices they

might not have on their own.”

- “A tangible problem-based learning product was created that can be refined to meet the needs of future students.”
 - “I got to see what teacher leadership was really like.”
- Those who were slightly less positive noted:
- “I strongly feel that peer-to-peer collaboration was established; however, with the limited time frame, I found that a plan was established to meet this goal but it was not followed through completely.”
 - “I would like to see the data that suggest that the collaboration that occurred is scalable for other teachers.”
 - “Time, very busy people limited by human constraints (such as family commitments and just exhaustion) are obvious factors in goal attainment.”
 - “This goal works better in theory than in reality due mainly to the limitation of available time.”

The survey also asked participants to list their personal goals for the project and rate the extent to which they fulfilled them. (See table above.)

ANOTHER TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

Worley was a veteran science teacher from Tri-County Early College in Murphy, North Carolina. As with many good initiatives in education, the survey results only assessed a portion of the impact. Worley's reflections across the summer documented some of the ways that the project encouraged her to think in new ways about her teaching.

“At the end of the year, I wondered if I had benefitted more from the collaboration than my partner. I was able to learn how to be a true facilitator. I learned about the most important piece

of problem-based learning: student voice. I was able to flesh out ideas with [my partner] Kathy during a dedicated time devoted to the process. I made a friend and have more confidence in myself as a teacher. I think Kathy felt empowered to do things a little differently in her classroom as well. In the end, it was not easy; however, it was worth it. I hope the project continues and I can be a part of it.”

EXPANDING THE PROJECT

Given the positive feedback from the survey and the strength of the narrative reports from participants, the project team expanded the project in November 2015 to include 26 teachers from seven districts in Western North Carolina: the original four districts, plus Macon, Jackson, and Avery counties.

Unlike the pilot project, which focused only on STEM areas at the secondary level, this phase includes teachers from a wide range of grade levels and curricular areas. This phase is also testing an online virtual collaboration and digital learning platform as a way to enable more frequent peer-to-peer cooperation.

The results from this phase are even more impressive than the first, with one participating district completely redefining its STEM instruction, other schools adopting a project-based learning model, and others overhauling their school or district professional learning networks to better model Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning.

Owens and other members of the current cohort are working with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to see how this grassroots model of teacher-to-teacher collaboration and professional development can be used as a model in other parts of the state. Plans are also underway to extend this project into a third year and scale it to even more districts in Western North Carolina. It is this type of impact and scale-up that helps assure that the work will continue as a sustainable model for highly effective, teacher-led professional learning.

GREAT POTENTIAL AT MINIMAL COST

These experiences suggest great potential to improve teacher professional development at minimal costs to school districts. By developing and implementing an interdistrict system that fosters in-classroom sharing and follow-up between teachers who have a desire to learn with peers who are expert practitioners of proven instructional methods, districts can facilitate a practical and deep transfer of knowledge that enables more immediate implementation and expansion of such practices within their schools.

This innovative form of professional learning for teachers and by teachers expands the number of pockets of teaching excellence and creates potential for quickening the pace of dissemination of highly effective teaching practices across more schools for the benefit of more students.

As districts, schools, and teachers face increasing expectations, we must rethink our traditional models of professional

development for more creative, flexible, and just-in-time alternatives. This effort, built on solid research that highlights the benefits of teacher-developed, peer-to-peer professional learning, is one example of such an alternative.

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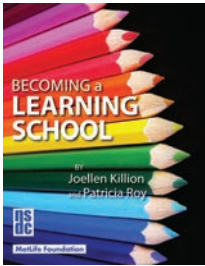
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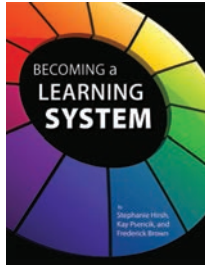


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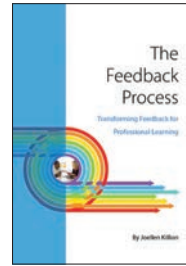


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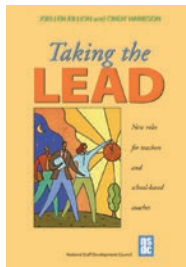


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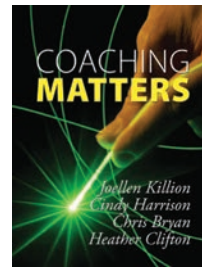


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ESTABLISH TIME



FOR LEARNING

FINDING TIME
TO COLLABORATE
TAKES CREATIVITY
AND COMMITMENT

THE ISSUE IN BRIEF

THE MAJOR CHALLENGE with time is finding it. Current school-day schedules and school-year calendars are leaner than ever because of budget reductions. States and districts have implemented furlough days to balance lean-and-mean budgets that show no sign of improving. Few are willing to take the leap toward reducing instructional time to improve learning because of the illogical nature of that proposition.

Yet across the nation and around the globe, instances exist where increasing time for educator collaborative professional learning that incorporates developing and analyzing assessment data, instructional planning, designing and implementing interventions, giving and receiving feedback, and reflecting on practice has positively influenced student achievement. The logic is simple: Better instruction leads to better learning.

By Joellen Killion

Finding time for job-embedded professional learning is one of the most frequently cited challenges with implementing change in education (ASCD, 2012; MetLife, 2012, 2013; Scholastic & Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012). Teachers, principals, education leaders, policymakers, and others recognize that professional learning is an important component of any plan to implement Common Core and other state standards. Yet they also acknowledge that time isn't available for the job-embedded, collaborative professional learning teachers want and research supports. Budget reductions in recent years have eliminated or significantly reduced opportunities for professional learning.

Many schools and districts, nevertheless, regularly find ways to create school-day schedules that provide

regular, frequent opportunities for teacher collaboration. Implementing college- and career-ready standards, new assessments, and other reforms requires focused time for collaboration among educators for professional learning and collaborative work.

Innovation in any industry requires time for retooling existing practices, equipment, procedures, and facilities. Implementing innovation in education also requires retooling — not once, but continuously. Change is dependent on learning — acquisition of knowledge, skills, practices, procedures, and dispositions. This type of acquisition is not instant. It requires building from awareness to expert use. Some suggest that process requires 10,000 hours of practice to achieve expertise (Colvin, 2010; Ericsson, Prietula, & Cokley, 2007; Gladwell, 2008) regardless of the field. Educators and education agencies are willing and eager to invest in continuous improvement to improve student success. They are fully aware that education is fundamental to any society's eco-

A sample case study

This fictional case illustrates how districts can use and adapt existing time within the schedule for collaborative professional learning.

Teachers in Martin School District had attended a number of the state-sponsored summer institutes on Common Core State Standards as well as served on the state’s model curriculum writing team. Now they were turning their attention to moving the standards into routine practice in their classrooms.

Because the standards required teachers to make several significant shifts in their familiar content and instructional strategies, they had struggled to keep up with

the necessary planning. They wondered if their decisions about classroom curriculum, formative assessments, and instruction aligned with those of their peers. They expressed this concern frequently at monthly faculty and grade-level, team, and department meetings.

The district’s Common Core State Standards implementation team met each month to consider challenges and issues related to implementation of Common Core standards. Members repeatedly talked about the need for teachers to have more time for professional learning, collaborative planning, reflection, analysis of student work, and refinement of content and pedagogy. The district’s chief academic officer and superintendent met with principals to understand how much time

was currently available and what options were possible for increasing time for teacher collaboration without either reducing time for student instruction or causing a financial burden for the district.

To examine the questions, the district created a time study team and invited representatives of key stakeholder groups, including teachers, school administrators, parents, community members, central office staff, and students. The superintendent charged the team with studying the issue of time within established parameters. Within six months, the team offered its recommendation to the superintendent, who carried it to the school board. Upon the school board’s approval, the district applied for and received a waiver of 15 minutes from the state’s

required amount of daily instructional time.

In the new school year, the district added the waiver time to the existing time, giving teachers in Martin School District 120 minutes each week over three days for collaborative professional learning and planning to make the curricular and instructional shifts designated by the new standards.

Principals, with support from central office staff and their own staff, acknowledged that they were responsible for creating the daily schedule within their schools to allocate the 120 minutes for collaboration, and for monitoring and supporting effective use of that new time. With the new school-day schedule, teachers accepted collective responsibility to use the time effectively to ensure each student’s needs were met so that achievement increases.

economic, social, physical, and mental well-being.

Yet, in the midst of rapid change with significant ramifications and consequences for students and educators, they are grappling with how to plan, manage, monitor, and execute implementation in a way that will increase the likelihood of success among multiple complex initiatives.

Implementation science suggests that dissemination and diffusion depend on a constellation of interrelated factors related to the innovation itself, the context in which it is implemented, the resources allocated to it, political will, personnel, and many others (Schillinger, 2010). Essentially, both the quality of the innovation and the methodology used for implementation influence the transfer of research into practice. Across the nation, policymakers, business leaders, parents, community leaders, and educators agree that college- and career-ready standards that require deeper learning for all students are long overdue.

In an analysis of schools with extended learning time, among the eight common factors contributing to student academic achievement are two related to teacher learning and collaboration. The authors point out that “more than one-third

of the schools in this study reported scheduling 15 or more days of professional development and planning — days when teachers are in school but students are not” (Kaplan & Chan, 2011, p. 63).

While the number of such teacher days varied from district to district in the study, the total rarely exceeded five or six in districts with conventional schedules. Along with the additional teacher days, many schools arranged schedules and staffing when school was in session to ensure regular opportunities for teachers “to meet with one another and with coaches and administrators as well” (Kaplan & Chan, 2011, p. 63). Schools in the study managed to create time for teacher collaboration in multiple ways.

The authors summarize their findings about the nature of time invested in teacher collaboration: “In fact, building teacher skills takes time: The hard work of refining lesson plans, analyzing student data to identify areas for improvement, and sharing instructional strategies requires that teachers and administrators have sufficient time to meet and work together. An expanded school schedule affords the time needed for this type of col-

This additional time within the school day for teacher collaborative learning was insufficient to promote the deeper learning the district's curriculum and instruction team knew teachers needed for full implementation of the new standards and assessments. They requested that the district consider increasing the number of professional learning days in the school-year calendar from four to eight to allow for content-specific, cross-school, and even districtwide professional learning focused on the district's new curriculum and instructional framework.

Their desire was to establish a firm foundation of knowledge and skills in the instructional strategies for Common Core standards. District leaders also wanted to prepare teacher leaders, including all grade-level,



team, and department chairs, on facilitating collaborative professional learning and work.

The first year of implementation of the revised school-day schedule was a learning experience for everyone. Teachers valued time with colleagues for learning and planning and acknowledged that they needed strategies and processes to be more efficient and effective. Principals asked for more guidance on how to support and coach teams and teacher leaders who facilitated

the teams. Central office staff struggled with letting teachers determine the focus of a large portion of their professional learning.

At the end of year one, teachers and principals reported that, despite the challenges of learning to work collaboratively, the time was well-used. Teachers felt more confident in implementing the district's new curriculum aligned with Common Core standards, had a greater respect for their peers' contribution to their success, and valued the time to learn

and work with colleagues. They reported that they had a stronger sense of community within the school. Most importantly, student achievement was steadily increasing, and principals reported that teachers were supporting each other's professional growth.

Overall, teachers, principals, and district leaders know that educator learning is as crucial as student learning. They feel confident they are addressing the challenge of creating some of the time they request for educator learning. However, they know that they need to demonstrate that the investment in educator professional learning is paying dividends for students before they are able to achieve the goal of three to four hours per week and 10 days per year.

laboration" (Kaplan & Chan, 2011, p. 63).

In other nations that outperform the U.S., students have less instructional time and teachers have substantially more time for collaborative professional learning (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). Schools, school systems, and states face intense education reform driven by the need to ensure that all students are college- and career-ready when they graduate. To put that reform into action, school leaders must commit to investing the time needed to achieve full implementation and results for students.

The assumption behind Learning Forward's workbook, *Establishing Time for Professional Learning* (Killion, 2013), from which this article is adapted, is simple: Any change worth doing is worth doing well. The new standards will not lead to changes in students' daily learning experiences unless educators are retooling learning for students. To engage in the retooling of learning requires an investment in educators' collaborative learning, planning, analysis, and redesign.

As decades of research in professional learning conclude, deep practice requires intensive, standards-based, collaborative

professional learning, sometimes extending across multiple years, that incorporates opportunities to practice without risk, coaching with feedback, and ongoing learning to refine and extend executive control of new practices. Foremost among the investments needed, according to educators, is time.

The purpose of Learning Forward's workbook is to guide districts and schools as they develop, vet, and implement recommendations for increasing collaborative learning time for educators, and then evaluate the effectiveness of the change. Implementing new standards and other innovations related to improving student achievement requires time for teachers to plan, analyze, and revamp instruction. It demands opportunities for teachers to engage in professional learning, engage in feedback and coaching, and use the feedback to continuously refine their practices. Coupling effective professional learning that includes school- and classroom-based support with time for collaboration with peers and experts is one strategy available to districts and schools implementing college- and career-ready standards.

WORKBOOK ORGANIZATION

Establishing Time for Professional Learning is organized into seven sections, each associated with one step of a process for studying, designing, and implementing time for educator collaboration, and then evaluating its success. (See the seven steps outlined at right.) Practitioners and education leaders may use the tools in the workbook to identify current allocations of time for professional learning, analyze how that time is being used and what results are associated with it, and increase the effectiveness of the existing time before seeking additional time.

These tools can be used by teams of educators, parents, and community members working together to examine the issue of time for collaborative educator professional learning. Schools, districts, and states are likely to be at various stages of implementation with providing frequent, routine time for educator collaboration. The workbook’s processes and tools provide educators, parents, and community leaders with resources to create time for educator collaboration, increase the amount of time for collaboration, or refine the use of collaborative time to achieve the district’s and school’s goals related to implementing Common Core standards, new assessments, and other reforms.

The workbook provides guidance to teams that are working together to create time for educator collaboration. Other Learning Forward resources can also help prepare educators for collaborative professional learning and work. Produced through the initiative Transforming Professional Learning to Prepare College- and Career-Ready Students: Implementing the Common Core, these resources and tools (available at www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core) help states and districts with the process for developing comprehensive professional learning plans.

Not all schools and districts will need to complete each step. Leaders in schools that already have established time for professional learning might be interested only in evaluating their use of time. They might want to recommend strategies for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of available time, or perhaps examine strategies for increasing the amount of time for professional learning.

There are two ideas to note about this seven-step process. First, this is not just a procedure to increase time *available* for professional learning. Rather, it is to increase time in which educators are *engaged* in professional learning. Second, this is not about creating time for individual planning of professional learning. It is about creating time for collaboration among teams of educators who share common professional learning needs based on identified student learning needs. If such shared work is the work a school or district wants to undertake, then this seven-step process will be useful.

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7 steps to establish time for professional learning

- 1. Form a time study team.** Engage representatives from various parts of the school or school system community to participate in the time study process and determine who will develop recommendations for the decision makers.
- 2. Examine assumptions about time.** Explore processes for assessing current perceptions held about time for education. Understanding personal assumptions about time early in the process will provide fundamental information for the time study team as it engages in its work.
- 3. Understand existing time.** Develop strategies for conducting an analysis of how time is currently used to inform the work of the time study team. In some cases, repurposing existing time is the first way to increase time for collaborative professional learning.
- 4. Study time options.** Discover resources that can guide the time study team as members examine models from other schools and school systems to inform their work.
- 5. Form and adopt recommendations about time.** Launch a public discussion about how to fulfill the need within the given parameters. After developing concrete recommendations, members of the time study team should decide how to vet them for consideration and modification before they make final recommendations.
- 6. Establish a plan to implement and evaluate accepted recommendations.** Ongoing monitoring and assessment is an essential part of the work that can generate information about the efficiency and effectiveness of the time investment.
- 7. Review time use and results.** Use ongoing data to make adjustments and improvements in the use of time to achieve the maximum benefits for educators and students.

“The first thing to understand is that schedules are not sacred. Unfortunately, most school administrators believe they are sacred to the point of being married to them. As a former principal, I understand that factors such as our stomachs and yellow buses sometimes dictate the schedule. All too often, however, schedules are geared to

what is best for the bus drivers and cafeteria workers’ schedules — especially if they do both — rather than being geared to what is best for students and teachers.

“My point is that a schedule is not what enables or disables collaborative professional learning. It is the top-down commitment to professional learning, or



lack thereof, that promotes or hinders collaborative professional learning. A

schedule is a ‘thing’ that can be — and should be — manipulated in ways that are best for student learning. Collaborative professional learning does not begin with plans for a schedule change, but with commitment to a cultural change.”

— Jack Linton

Assistant superintendent
Petal (Mississippi)
School District

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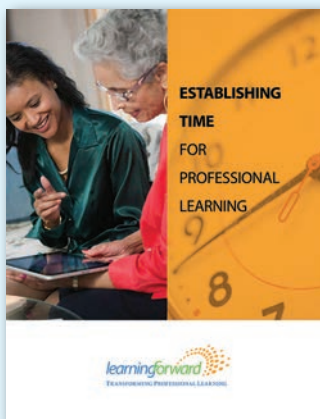
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LEARN MORE ABOUT FINDING TIME

This article is adapted from the workbook *Establishing Time for Professional Learning* by Joellen Killion (Learning Forward, 2013). Finding time for job-embedded professional learning is one of the most frequently cited challenges with implementing the Common Core State Standards. The processes and tools in this workbook provide educators, parents, and community leaders with resources to increase or refine the use of time for educator collaboration to achieve goals associated with any key initiative.

Where members can find the workbook:

www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/commoncore/establishing-time-for-professional-learning.pdf

Where members can take the online course:

www.learningforward.org/learning-opportunities/online-courses/establishing-time-for-collaborative-professional-learning

AN OPEN DOOR TO LEARNING

INQUIRY PROCESS BUILDS COLLABORATIVE CULTURES WITHIN AND BETWEEN SCHOOLS

By Lisa Cranston

When I began my work as a curriculum consultant for a local school board more than 10 years ago, most professional development took place at the district office or another central location, such as catering halls. Teachers and administrators would leave their schools, come to a workshop, then return to their schools and be expected to implement whatever strategies had been covered at the session. As consultants, we

were expected to have expertise in our area and to share our expertise with teachers, administrators, trustees, and the public.

Since that time, there has been a dramatic shift in how we support educators and administrators in their professional learning. While there is still a time and a place for centralized workshops, much of the professional learning takes place at the school and is directed by the needs of educators and students.

This deprivatization of classroom practice means that no longer are teachers working in isolation behind closed doors. Instead, professional learning has moved to the school and the classroom, and teachers are encouraged to

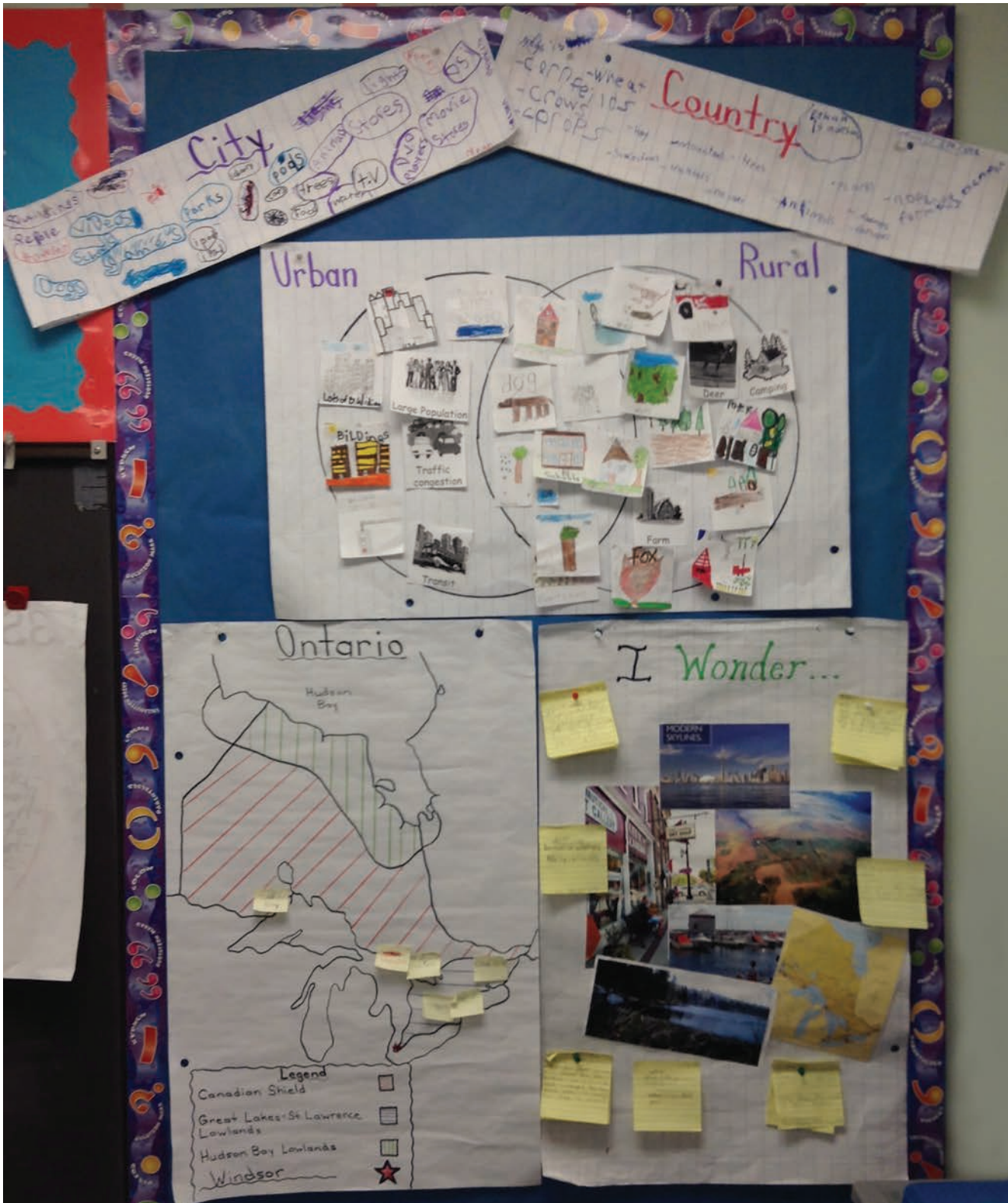


Photo by GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
 Third-grade social studies students used inquiry-based learning to study urban and rural communities in Ontario.

share their work and their students' work. Teachers are able to observe students in other classes, have other teachers observe their students, and participate in discussions about the teaching and the learning they observed.

Changing the deeply rooted norm of privacy has been difficult as such a change required risk-taking by teachers and leaders (Fullan, 2007). As a result of this shift, we have had to re-examine our roles in supporting teachers in their professional learning. Collaborative cultures take time to build, and a one-size-fits-all approach does not work.

With the support of central office curriculum consultants, educators at three schools in Southwestern Ontario used a collaborative inquiry process combined with classroom observations using a lab class model to investigate student inquiry-based learning while building a culture of openness and professional learning within and between schools.

PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

Collaborative inquiry is “a practice of engaging educators as researchers and has been shown to be an effective means to both professional learning and to enhanced student learning. The inquiry process begins with a question or wondering about learning or the learners, and educators work together to analyze student learning, engage in professional reading and dialogue, and reflect on their practice. The process is not linear; there are many entry points along the journey” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014).

Three urban sites participated in this collaborative teacher inquiry project using an inquiry-based approach to teaching in primary grades during the 2013-14 school year. The kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators at those schools had participated in professional learning focused on student inquiry as part of the school board's support during the five-year rollout of full-day kindergarten beginning in September 2010.

They were eager to continue their exploration of student-led inquiry and share their learning with colleagues in other grades. The administrators at all three schools were also eager to extend student inquiry-based learning beyond the kindergarten classrooms.

In addition, curriculum consultants had offered a three-day summer institute on inquiry learning in August 2013, and kindergarten and primary teachers from each of these schools attended and expressed an interest in continuing their learning. The final combined

team from three schools included five kindergarten teachers, four early childhood educators, four 1st-grade teachers, two 1st/2nd-grade combined teachers, four 2nd-grade teachers, one 2nd/3rd-grade teacher, one intermediate special education teacher, and three curriculum consultants.

Stoll (2009) notes that capacity building in schools is strengthened by groups of teachers coming together to share and analyze their work, but school-to-school learning networks give schools an even wider range of ideas and choices and moves good practice around the system. Teachers learn with one another as well as from one another and learn more about their learning.

We met four times as a whole group with all three schools in what we called networked learning sessions. During these whole-group sessions, teachers could network with teachers from other schools to share and analyze their work together. Between each networked learning session, schools selected a half-day to engage in in-school classroom observations using a lab class model. Each of the three curriculum consultants involved in this project was aligned with one of the participating schools and engaged in the learning at the school level.

INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING

According to Scardamalia (2002, in Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013), “inquiry-based learning is an approach to teaching and learning that places students' questions, ideas, and observations at the centre of the learning experience. Educators play an active role throughout the process by establishing a culture where ideas are respectfully challenged, tested, redefined, and viewed as improvable, moving children from a position of wondering to a position of enacted understanding and further questioning. Underlying this approach is the idea that both educators and students share responsibility for learning.”

When students are engaged in learning, their motivation, persistence, enthusiasm, and achievement increase. Research suggests that students are more likely to develop as engaged, self-directed learners in inquiry-based classrooms (Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010, in Ontario Ministry of Education, 2011).

Inquiry-based learning fits with our view of teaching and learning as multilayered and multifaceted, with connections between content areas as well as between all the learners — adult and children — in the classroom. Using a combination of teacher collaborative inquiry and a lab class model, our group set out to explore inquiry learning with kindergarten to 3rd-grade students.

LAB CLASS MODEL

As part of the initial networked learning session in October, the teams worked through the first three steps of the lab class model. Lab class is a professional learning structure focused on descriptive observations of student conversation, action, and product in an effort to improve student learning, modified from

Stoll (2009) notes that capacity building in schools is strengthened by groups of teachers coming together to share and analyze their work, but school-to-school learning networks give schools an even wider range of ideas and choices and moves good practice around the system. Teachers learn with one another as well as from one another and learn more about their learning.

the district's work using instructional rounds (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2011).

PREPARING FOR LAB CLASS

1. Determine a focus.

Teams developed their collaborative inquiry questions based on evidence about students' capabilities and areas for growth as well as their own professional curiosities about inquiry-based learning. Questions varied from school to school and continued to evolve throughout the project, which ran from October to May. We created collaborative inquiry questions using the frame: What is the impact of teacher practice on student learning?

2. Learn to be descriptive.

We knew that it was important to spend time learning to be descriptive when observing students. City et al. (2011) noted that trying to simply observe what we see at the most basic descriptive level without inference or judgment is very difficult, and we had experienced this in working with educators on other projects. We used photos and video clips of students engaged in learning to practice taking descriptive observations and provided feedback to one another on our progress.

3. Discuss norms.

As a group, we created norms for the in-school classroom observations, which we reviewed before each classroom observation visit. Our norms were:

- Be positive: Focus on student competencies.
- Record observations of student conversations, actions, and products.
- Silently observe for at least 10 minutes before asking students any questions.
- Ensure any questions asked are open-ended.
- Minimize hallway conversations.

ENGAGING IN LAB CLASS

These next steps took place at each school. During the first networked meeting, each school selected a date for its first lab class. Two teachers at each school volunteered to be the first classes observed. Teachers received a full morning of released time and supply coverage, and the curriculum consultant aligned with each school also attended the lab class to facilitate the learning.

4. Visit classrooms to take descriptive observations of student conversations, actions, and products.

Before heading to the classrooms, we met briefly to review the norms and the team's inquiry question. The two teachers who had volunteered to be observed gave a five-minute overview of the inquiry happening in their classroom and shared any concerns they wanted us to keep in mind when observing. We found that 20 minutes in each classroom was enough time

to collect observation data.

Teachers in the project noted that they continued this practice beyond the lab class visits. In her feedback, one kindergarten teacher wrote, "Writing out reflections of our students' experiences (documenting) has allowed us to clearly see the next steps in their learning. Being able to revisit these written statements allows us to see how far the children have come or revisit areas of learning as necessary."

5. Engage in individual analysis of observations.

Following the classroom observations, we returned to our meeting area. Each participant selected three to five observations that were descriptive, student-focused, asset-based, and related to the identified student learning focus to share with the group. Each observation was then recorded on a separate sticky note.

6. Cluster observations and name emerging trends.

With the curriculum consultant acting as facilitator, teachers worked together to name and cluster emerging trends as teachers shared the observations they had recorded.

7. Identify conditions present.

Next, we discussed what conditions were present that allowed these trends to emerge. Conditions might include the routines and procedures in place, the organization of materials in the classroom environment, or specific teaching strategies. We took time to celebrate these conditions, our learning, and our students' learning.

As the project progressed, we realized that this step was very important for all participants. We encouraged and supported each other by recognizing the great learning that was happening, by both teachers and students, in the classrooms we visited. The special education teacher in our group told us, "At our last lab class, my class was observed. At the feedback, I was happy to hear that one of my weakest students was completing the activity successfully and reaching higher-level thinking. Inquiry has allowed me to see the growth in my students by focusing on their oral contributions."

8. Determine next steps.

Based on the observations from lab class as well as the contributions from teachers whose classrooms were not observed, we collaboratively determined next steps and the professional learning we needed to engage in related to these next steps. The curriculum consultants supporting this project met periodically to share the learning and next steps for each group in order to determine common learning goals, address questions, and consider possible resources.

After each cycle of lab class, we would again get together as a whole group for a networked learning session to engage in shared learning across schools and grades.

CONSOLIDATION AND CULMINATION OF LAB CLASS

9. Share the learning.

At the final networked learning session in May, we guided teachers and administrators as they reflected on their own personal learning, the students' learning, and their team's collaborative inquiry journey.

We asked them to consider with whom they wanted to share their learning and how they might share it. Each team developed its own communication plan, which included using Twitter to share with parents and the community, creating an infographic about inquiry learning to share with all stakeholders, and using bulletin board documentation panels to share with school colleagues as well as parents.

One kindergarten team noted, "Our purposeful documentation has provided parents with an opportunity for them to make meaning of their child's learning." A 1st-grade teacher said, "The inquiry process naturally involves the family as well because the students come home requesting materials or talking about what they are learning and wanting to research more and bringing what they know from home back to their learning at school."

Staff members at one school, realizing that colleagues who hadn't been able to participate due to funding limitations were also interested in exploring student inquiry, decided to invite a colleague to be their "inquiry buddy" for the following school year.

REFLECTIONS, CHALLENGES, AND NEXT STEPS

As the project progressed, students' enthusiasm for learning when engaged in inquiry encouraged and motivated team members. Their natural curiosity and inquisitiveness drove them to explore ideas and issues that were meaningful and relevant to them in a real-world context.

Teachers nurture this natural inquisitiveness through an inquiry approach. "They are enabling students to address curriculum content in integrated and 'real-world' ways and to develop and practice higher-order thinking skills and habits of mind that lead to deep learning" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2011).

We examined the types of questions that students were asking of themselves and each other about their topics of investigation. Wien (2008) argues that "thinking of questions as 'seeds to thinking' rather than queries requiring answers is a major change in a teacher's teaching practice. If the question is a 'seed,' it is asked for a different purpose than receiving a

correct answer; it is asked to stimulate thinking and feeling. To be asked, 'What do you think?' is a very different engagement than being asked for an answer."

Teachers observed that students were more engaged in their learning because they were exposed to authentic and meaningful experiences. One 1st-grade teacher noted that "students have developed a sense of community because they are now working more collaboratively and sharing more of their ideas with each other. Students feel valued because their interests are considered and their environment reflects their ideas."

Resources that previously sat on shelves unused were now eagerly explored as teachers sought more information to deepen their understanding of student learning through inquiry. Through our discussions, experiences, and readings, we were forced to reconsider the roles of teacher and student.

One challenge we faced was addressing teachers' beliefs about the overall and specific expectations in the standardized curriculum. We heard concerns from teachers, parents, and administrators about the need to "cover the curriculum." Wien (2008) stated that "the explicit and direct instruction of a linear, fragmented approach is one way to teach a standardized curriculum. For young children, it is not the best approach, for it contravenes the research knowledge bases of child development and neuroscience. Another way to teach standardized curriculum is to embed it in richer, more integrated processes such as emergent curriculum, where its presence can be documented to make it visible, rather than being measured on tests."

A team of 3rd-grade teachers exploring a science unit on structure and stability reported that "in making student voice more visible, we have seen our students take a lot more ownership for the learning. Many students engaged in problem-solving to create their own structures using a variety of materials to demonstrate stability. One student created a book about the Titanic that he turned into a play, and he is now creating a movie based on his prior knowledge."

Through this collaborative inquiry model, curriculum consultants, colleagues, and administrators supported teachers as they investigated the impact of inquiry-based student learning and found that, not only did they cover the curriculum expectations, but in many cases the learning extended beyond expectations as students delved deeper into the questions they were exploring.

One kindergarten team noted, "Students are given opportunities to reflect on their learning to bridge the gaps between earlier concepts and new learning. For example, students learned about tally marks to vote on a book, and in a future activity, they were able to use tally marks to keep track of student points."

Leadership in collaborative inquiry and professional learning is imperative. In their review of the history of teacher collaboration in education reform, Riveros, Newton, and Burgess (2012) noted that Dewey had argued that teachers' reflection

As we deepen and extend our school-based learning through collaborative inquiry, we have to consider how we as central office staff can support teachers, system leaders, and administrators in creating and sustaining a culture of professional learning in our schools.

on their practice would benefit the entire school system but that leadership was critical. Without organizational support, the research they cited showed that teacher collaboration made no difference.

As we deepen and extend our school-based learning through collaborative inquiry, we have to consider how we as central office staff can support teachers, system leaders, and administrators in creating and sustaining a culture of professional learning in our schools. Models like the collaborative inquiry/lab class model described here, with a combination of networked learning between schools at large-group sessions and small-group, in-school classroom observations, offer an option for engaging in purposeful professional learning. At our final meeting, a 3rd-grade teacher concluded, “Working together, we have learned that we have some common struggles, and we are able to learn from each other. We are more effective as a team.”

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The sandwich strategy

Continued from p. 18

WORKING TOGETHER TO GET BETTER

We can best support student learning by teaching in response to students' current thinking. Supporting teachers' collective analysis of student work can be a powerful tool for informing and improving instruction.

The information gathered from a rich formative assessment task can support teachers' learning about how students come to know particular disciplines. With the support of a skilled instructional coach and their colleagues, teachers can take what they have uncovered about students' thinking and collectively make commitments to try instructional tasks and strategies that can be reflected upon later.

By examining student work together, the school community engages in conversations that support continuous improvement of instruction and student learning. Student data analysis is better together.

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NIMBLE NAVIGATION

A CONSTANT CYCLE OF ASSESSMENT KEEPS LEARNING ON COURSE

By Wendy James and Terry Johanson

The purpose of professional learning is to change what teachers know and can do to better support student learning. Over the last decade, professional learning has changed dramatically in an attempt to be more engaging and productive (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009).

What's missing for many, however, is time or resources to devote to a large-scale evaluation of the professional learning. Districts may track time spent or whether teachers valued the experience (Hirsh, 2013), but this only assesses if the learning was engaging or engaged in, not if it was effective.

According to Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (2011), professional learning needs to start with student, educator, and system data, and that data should be used to assess forward progress. Internal evaluation of professional learning can be a natu-



SAMPLE FACILITATION GUIDE

CONTENT

Identify the topic.

PROCESS

- Learning activities.
- Processes, including descriptions.
- Questions being posed.
- Movement and grouping information.

ASSESSMENT

What we anticipate hearing or observing:
What information is most important to know? Include possible misconceptions.

TIME

Specify a time frame.

MATERIALS

- Handouts.
- Slides.
- Videos.
- Table materials.
- Room materials.



ral part of any facilitation process, providing rich information about the impact on teacher understanding and application. The evaluation can shape learning opportunities to make them more relevant to teachers' needs and more effective.

PLANNING FOR FLEXIBILITY

Just like in a classroom, a professional learning facilitator needs to base planning and instruction on assessment. Adult learners need the learning experience to be as focused as possible on their questions and their teaching circumstances.

Professional learning leaders can plan the learning experience so it is designed to gather data about teachers' needs and respond to that data immediately. The first step is to use a planning framework that encompasses the content, strategies, assessment, and possible timing for each step in a facilitation sequence (Johanson, 2012).

When planning for differentiation, facilitators need to consider participants' various learning preferences, personality

types, background knowledge, and needs. Differentiation may occur two ways. One is to ensure that the learning experience includes a variety of strategies and content throughout the day. Another is to provide choice and different opportunities within a specific content area.

However, planning for different learning needs, offering choice, giving time to talk and think, and time to apply learning can only accomplish so much. To be responsive in leading professional learning, we use a constant cycle of formative assessment and immediate changes based on the data we gather.

When we plan any facilitation, whether it's a half-day session or extends over multiple school years, we always plan how to use formative assessment to collect data about what teachers understand, value, or may need next so we can respond. Here are some of our most successful facilitation tools.

■ Predict possible answers for the major questions you will ask participants.

These should span responses from learners who have a deep understanding of the content being explored to those who are new to thinking about this idea. When planning, consider possible misconceptions as well as what statements might reveal those misconceptions.

For example, when participants ask, “When do I find time for formative assessment?” a facilitator knows that a participant understands formative assessment as a tool or action rather than stance within a classroom. If this is a predicted misconception, then a facilitator should have materials or processes prepared that can address the learning gap or misconception. All differentiation begins with good planning.

■ Find out who the professional learners are as soon as possible.

Formative assessment of adult learners allows facilitators to get a sense of who is in the room. This information can guide facilitators to make appropriate choices throughout the experience and allow professional learning to fit the learning preferences and needs of participants.

We use opening sharing circles when we want to establish community or norms while getting to know our learners. When participants introduce themselves and discuss what their hopes are for the day, we gather information about what we need to do to meet their needs.

When we want to understand how participants are feeling, we might them to describe which of the images on their table is most like their current state. We also use different image cards when we want teachers to describe how they think or feel about an idea in education to someone in the room they have not met.

In addition to helping teachers connect to others, engaging participants in building metaphors gets them active quickly. Another option is to ask participants to work in small groups to generate questions related to the day’s topic. Each of these activities is more effective in small groups because more people

get to speak, allowing us to see trends across the various tables.

■ Respond to participant goals during professional learning.

It is important to know what teachers want to learn and how those goals might fit into the learning outcomes facilitators set. It is also imperative that facilitators know whether learn-

ers are meeting those outcomes and what barriers they may be experiencing that might prevent them from implementing new ideas in their classrooms. We use three main strategies to help us know where participants are during learning.

1. **Ask participants to revisit their questions throughout the day to determine how satisfied they are that they have an answer.** We often ask participants to represent their understanding visually by filling in an open circle with the percentage of an answer they have so far or writing what they still need to know just before we take a break. We walk around during break to take the pulse of the learning.
2. **Ask participants to synthesize ideas and present to their colleagues.** This helps us know if participants understand well enough to be able to use the ideas later and surfaces topics we haven’t addressed well enough. It also raises misconceptions and makes teachers’ commitments to action public.
3. **Ask participants to fill in graphic organizers as they are learning.** If the graphic organizers are large enough, we can see at a glance what participants think is the key information and any concerns they may have. Graphic organizers are especially helpful for seeing what participants see as potential applications and how they are connecting to prior knowledge.

■ Be a professional eavesdropper.

Small-group conversations, rather than pairs or individual thinking, allow facilitators to be professional eavesdroppers. Listening in on four or five conversations is more manageable and less awkward than listening to 15 pairs. It is also easier to enter a small group and pose a question that extends the conversation.

As groups chronicle their discussion on chart paper or using ledger paper-sized graphic organizers, a facilitator can read the thinking generated by a group more quickly than having individual responses on paper or electronic devices.

■ Make it safe to surface misunderstandings.

Many strategies will expose misconceptions if you ask two questions that are opposing or related to similar concepts. For instance, a snowball strategy can be made even more insightful when it uses two opposing, and often misunderstood, ideas.

A traditional snowball asks participants to respond to a concept or question, throw their response, pick up someone else’s paper, write, throw, write, and throw. These ideas are then shared in the larger group, but nobody knows who wrote what, making it safe to share your thinking.

One way to use this strategy might be to ask, “What do you know about differentiation?” on one paper, and, on another color of paper, “What do you know about modification?” Participants then respond to both papers throughout the exercise. By comparing answers to these two stems, it is possible to clear up misconceptions in the room in a safe way.

It is important to know what teachers want to learn and how those goals might fit into the learning outcomes facilitators set. It is also imperative that facilitators know whether learners are meeting those outcomes and what barriers they may be experiencing that might prevent them from implementing new ideas in their classrooms.

■ Connect your agenda with your assessment.

Reflection on learning should occur throughout a learning experience and at the end of the day to alert facilitators to what they might do to adjust the learning to best meet educator needs. We use a feedback form we call an agenda assessment (Johanson, 2012).

An agenda assessment has two purposes: It provides an agenda for participants while simultaneously providing participants opportunities for reflection and feedback. Questions posed should span at least the first three levels of Guskey's (2000) levels of evaluating professional development: participant satisfaction with the learning experience, participant learning, and barriers to implementation.

A facilitator might also ask questions about participant intent to implement, which is Guskey's fourth level of evaluation. If follow-up is possible, then participants and facilitators can gather evidence about implementation and impact on students.

An agenda assessment replaces a traditional exit slip at the end of the day. Rather than asking participants to fill out the entire assessment when the session finishes, a facilitator can pause periodically to provide time for participants to reflect on their learning after each portion of the agenda. Facilitators can skim agenda assessments as they circulate.

■ Respond to your formative assessment.

It can be hard to plan regular quick checks into your professional learning, but may be even harder to respond to what you find. A new facilitator can sometimes identify when things aren't working but doesn't always know what to do in that moment. These strategies respond to participant needs as they arise.

1. **Stop and do it a new way.** Sometimes formative assessment tells us the learning experience isn't working. Rather than saying it again more slowly and loudly, select a new facilitation strategy from a different category.
2. **Know what your most critical outcomes are at the start of the session.** We categorize parts of our agenda as critical and nearly a third as "nice to know." It helps us avoid dumping everything we know on participants and helps us choose what to cut when a new need comes up or we need more time. Sometimes facilitators don't respond to learner needs because they feel they'll miss something critical or run out of time.
3. **Anticipate points of difficulty.** Like any good instructional designer, we think ahead about points where different beliefs or approaches may become an issue. If they do, we use mediational questions. Mediational questions are open-ended, plural, and tentative. They imply that there is not one right answer, making it safe for participants to explore multiple viewpoints. For example, rather than asking, "What are you going to do when you return to your school?" a facilitator might ask, "What might be some possible actions you may take when you return to your school?"

Mediational questions allow for rich conversation with a small group, exploring ideas and making connections to existing knowledge and learning needs.

4. **Regroup.** At times, different participants have different needs. We use the same types of different learning centers in our professional learning that any teacher might use a classroom. We describe a series of different types of learning on a variety of topics occurring throughout the room and let the learner pick. Some people might scan QR codes with their phones to participate in a simulation, while others solve authentic problems with a group, and still others quietly read research summaries. At the end, participants give quick summaries about what they learned and how it can be used.


Professional learning can be a rich, relevant experience, but it depends on planning for differentiation and formative assessment.

Professional learning can be a rich, relevant experience, but it depends on planning for differentiation and formative assessment. When leaders embed data collection in professional learning processes, those processes become much more effective and satisfying for teachers, and ultimately, more likely to impact student results.

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WHAT ARE WE LEARNING ABOUT HOW WE LEARN?

By Bruce Joyce and Emily Calhoun

Remarkably, although today's world teems with pundits and policymakers telling us how to run schools and classrooms, they supply little support for research on what educators are actually like, how we learn, or how we can generate schools where the least likely kids

thrive and their neighborhoods get better.

New — and very good — curriculums and technologies (i.e. Common Core State Standards; science, technology, engineering, and math; and information and communication technologies) are ready for implementation, but states and school districts have few places to get help in designing the amounts and types of professional development that will enable them to fulfill the promise of those advances.

For 35 years, our colleagues and we have struggled to put a few teaspoons of information into the nearly empty bucket of studies on professional development and school renewal. We have tried to find out how people can learn to use new curriculums and ways of teaching — not just polishing the old, comfy stuff.

We have done some studies that would meet high standards of design, learned from peering at correlations, and stumbled on important things while teaching kids and teachers and talking to the folks next door. Our best idea last year drew on something the vet said while Bruce was trying to hold the cat still for a shot. Research and life experience actually do feed each other.

A LINE OF RESEARCH

Our group of teacher-researchers has been compelled to learn how to describe teaching styles and measure teaching skills, how to track transfer from the workshop to the classroom, and has at times nearly obsessed over the difference between short-term and long-term effects. The members have to be conversant with curriculums old and new and, when necessary, help the folks they are studying decipher the symbols on the whiteboard menu. (Beverly Showers was a major partner in developing and implementing the early studies. See Joyce & Showers, 2003.)

In addition to our focus on education and psychology, we have hunted for relevant work from organizational development, school renewal, cooperative learning, group therapy, and military training. The folks who design training for elite Navy pilots known as Top Guns know quite a lot about educating people. Trying to design professional learning seems puny by comparison, or it may seem that way because their work is done up in the air. Or, perhaps calamity evolves differently. In the sky, a small error can have immediate and sometimes lethal consequences. In a classroom, not teaching a child to read has catastrophic consequences, but they evolve over time — although just as surely.

WHAT WE DISCOVERED WHILE REACHING AN IMPORTANT MILESTONE AND BEING BROUGHT UP SHORT.

Let's fast-forward to a point where we felt confident about the learning capability of teachers (which is very

RELATED READING

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Joyce, B. & Showers, B. (2003). *Student achievement through staff development*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

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good) and the design of professional development that would enable just about every educator to develop skill in models of teaching and curriculum new to them — including very complex practices.

The following components, implemented well and not rushed, enable educators to reach that goal:

1. Opportunities to study the rationale of a new practice, its purposes, evidence supporting it, and its application to school curriculum areas — *the basic and applied knowledge base*.
2. Opportunities to see it in action. The study of the knowledge base is interwoven with modeling. Video has been a boon. Complex processes can be captured with students of varying characteristics and in several curriculum areas.
3. Opportunities to plan for practice. Participants develop lessons tailored to their own students and curriculum. Essentially, they leave the workshop setting ready to practice. Without studying the rationale, studying demonstrations, and preparing to practice, participants will not have the skill to implement.

A PROBLEM EMERGES

Given those three components, almost everybody built the knowledge and skill to use those lessons — and they implemented the ones they planned during the workshops. However, when they were observed and interviewed a few weeks down the road, only a handful of teachers had created their own new lessons and units and were using them.

We were stymied. This type of professional development is much more elaborate than most staff development offerings. What to do next?

HOW DESIGN AFFECTS IMPLEMENTATION			
COMPONENTS	EFFECT ON KNOWLEDGE	SHORT-TERM USE: % IMPLEMENTING	LONG-TERM USE: % IMPLEMENTING
Rationale	+++	5%-10%	5%
Rationale plus demonstrations	++++	5%-10%	5%-10%
Rationale plus demonstrations and preparation time	+++++	80% and higher	5%-10%
All of the above plus peer coaching	+++++	90% and higher	90% and higher



The teachers knew all along!

Teachers had long complained that after they complete a course or set of workshops, it is rare that anyone follows up, visiting and providing support and encouragement.

It made good sense to pay attention to those folks, so we instituted follow-up by workshop providers in our next set of studies. Every few weeks, teachers participated in meetings that included more demonstrations, discussions, and preparation of lessons. The providers dropped in every couple of weeks to discuss progress and offer help.

The duration and frequency of practice rose dramatically — 90% of participants used the additions to their repertoire until they became a normal part of practice. (Our longest follow-up study has lasted 10 years.)

Importantly, teachers told providers that most of their needs had to do with weaving the new approach into the curriculum and the flow of their normal practice. They were fine with the interactive skills needed to use the new models but needed help in planning.

Our next question: Can teachers help each other?

FOLLOW-UP WORKS, BUT ...

The problem with provider follow-up is that it is not practical. A pair of providers can work with groups of 50, 60, even 100, but visiting that many people on a regular basis is not feasible. We needed to learn whether the educators could follow themselves.

So we added to the design a monthly follow-up workshop and asked participants to get together on a weekly basis to discuss how to make the curricular or instructional model work. Even better, they could plan lessons that they each teach so they could share the results and solve common problems together.

With this arrangement, implementation was very high. (See results above.) And, as we discovered, teachers do not need special training to be able to work effectively with partners. Nor do they need any special skills to relate over common content and goals.

Caveat: These findings are when new repertoire is the object.

Where a practice fits easily into the repertoire, understanding it and just seeing it a couple of times may enable someone to acquire it. However, some new practices are trickier to learn than we expect. Learning to use overhead projectors was a problem in the past. Learning to integrate an interactive whiteboard has turned out to be a trial for many as is the integration of the internet and other computer-related practices.

ASK TEACHERS WHAT THEY NEED

We suggest that those planning professional development ask participants what they need to learn certain things — for instance, survey the Common Core/STEM/information and communications technologies complex and try to figure out what will be easy and what requires serious additions to repertoire. If teachers need new knowledge and skills, the information we have summarized can come in handy.

A caution: Because of the dramatic effects of peer coaching, sometimes workshop providers give little attention to the other components. We come across workshops, and even courses, that omit the demonstrations or the preparation for practice, or the study of rationale, or deal with them too quickly. Without those, there is insufficient content for the peers to implement! If time is short, focus the workshop on a specific practice, but use all the components.

We also find that sometimes coaches are taught that feedback is their major tool. That may be the case when polishing already established practices. New practices require the other components: The coach needs to learn to help colleagues study rationale, model, help with preparation of lessons and units, and find a partner — or not much will happen.

We favor placing coaches in classrooms as teams. They can try things out, invite teachers to observe, and free each other to help colleagues in situ.

Until we learn better ways to get the job done.

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“ We make the mistake of using things to develop people instead of using people to develop things.”

Susan Millionses

InterACT Design Group
Charlotte, North Carolina

JSD: What do you wish you had known when you first began your journey as a learning leader?

Milliones: I wish I would have understood the power of the default culture. It is not enough to train, coach, mentor, or collaborate. We tend to completely overwhelm overwhelming problems with one or two strategies when what is needed are four to six strategies implemented on multiple levels simultaneously.

JSD: What is the one crucial piece of advice you would give to those just starting out in the professional learning world?

Milliones: Remember that people are more important than things. Get some training in change leadership both inside and outside of education. Education is a spiritual endeavor. It

cannot be accomplished through the mere manipulation of material things. We make the mistake of using things to develop people instead of using people to develop things.

JSD: What fundamental resource do you find yourself going back to often, and therefore you would be quickest to recommend (and why)?

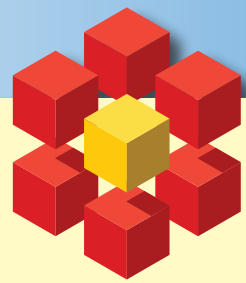
Milliones: Two things: I use the Cynefin Framework from the Cognitive Edge to help people understand that all problems (and solutions) are not created equal. When I present Cynefin, the entire room breathes a sigh of relief. Cynefin makes sense of what they are experiencing. There are levels of problem complexity that require different solution approaches on certain levels of the organization. We think that we should solve problems, but it is much more desirable to dissolve them instead. Rather than solve the same problems over and over, you can dissolve them by redesigning the

systems that create the problems in the first place.

Second, I use Influencer from VitalSmarts to help people understand what it really takes to change behavior. We use the levers of influence to design cohesive synergetic strategic plans aligned to the Standards for Professional Learning to dissolve the problems we identify using Cynefin. Influencer is pragmatic, user-friendly, and can be applied to every aspiration from a lesson in guided reading to years-long system change.

JSD: What have we not asked that you would most like to say to beginning learning leaders?

Milliones: Become a professional learning designer. Study design thinking and use design principles. The Standards for Professional Learning are critical parts. Their power lies in how they interact together in a cohesive whole. ■



advice

FROM LEARNING PROFESSIONALS

We asked Learning Forward members around the country for the counsel they'd like to give to new learning leaders.



THE PROMISE OF PARTNERSHIPS

RESEARCHERS JOIN FORCES WITH EDUCATORS TO SOLVE PROBLEMS OF PRACTICE

By Gail R. Meister and Cynthia L. Blitz

Some of the valuable learning that practicing educators gain about how to do their jobs better comes neither from intentionally designed professional learning nor daily on-the-job experience and reflection. An auxiliary and potentially powerful source of practitioners' knowledge, skills, and dispositions can come from participation in research-practice partnerships. Research-practice partnerships link researchers, usually faculty at institutions of higher education, with practitioners working in schools, district central offices,

county offices, or state departments of education.

Though professional learning and research-practice partnerships share the goals of impacting student learning and ultimately increasing achievement and can have a number of features in common, they differ in one fundamental way: While intentionally designed professional learning focuses on enhancing educators' awareness, understanding, and instructional skills, research-practice partnerships focus on the creation, transfer, and use of knowledge to solve problems of practice.

There are several reasons for professional learning leaders to take a closer look at research-practice partnerships. Funders, policymakers, and a growing number of educa-

tion professionals increasingly expect the use of evidence-based practices to improve student results. Given these expectations, practitioners often seek to identify high-impact activities that do not impose further demands on their busy schedules and that are feasible to implement given the limits of their budget. Research-practice partnerships are a potentially cost-effective vehicle for accomplishing this task because they are focused on the specific needs and circumstances of the education agency.

Although attention to the promise of research-practice partnerships has varied over the past 15 years, they are now seen as central to the improvement of the educational system. Federal providers of technical assistance like the regional educational laboratories increasingly rely on these types of partnerships for determining and delivering their services, and other major funders like the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the Spencer Foundation, and the William T. Grant Foundation champion implementation of research-practice partnerships.

To help professional learning leaders understand how research-practice partnerships may be a vehicle for high-quality professional learning, we offer below answers to common questions about the forms these partnerships may take, the role of Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011), and how professional learning leaders can maximize the quality and quantity of learning for practitioners.

WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF RESEARCH-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIPS?

Building on the work of Coburn, Penuel, and Geil (2013) and others, we have identified five types of research-practice partnerships that we will discuss here: communities of practice, study councils, research alliances, design research collaborations, and networked improvement communities.

Communities of practice are groups of individual practitioners, sometimes including experts, who come together around a shared concern or interest to exchange relevant information, ideas, and experiences. They occasionally undertake a joint project such as creating a tool that responds to a common need among members.

Typically self-selecting, members may represent a variety of similar entities, different parts of a single organization,

or, less commonly, cross-field or cross-sector entities. For the most part, members are loosely connected: They engage as little or as much as needed and remain members for as long as they feel a community of practice meets their needs.

Communities of practice may be leaderless; alternatively an inner core of members may take on planning and facilitating roles (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). A few studies from education and other fields suggest that communities of practice can contribute to generating new knowledge, building new capabilities, and bridging the knowing-doing gap (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology, 2014).

Study councils involve partnerships between one or more universities and one or more school districts for the collaborative study of common educational problems (National School Development Council, 2015). Practitioner members are usually school or district leaders. Though a few study councils undertake or commission original research, most offer courses and workshops in which job-alike practitioners review available research-based information to address specific problems of practice with input from university-affiliated or other experts. Practitioner members commit to participate in discrete learning experiences that may last up to a year. Study council membership is usually fee-based. Members' continuing subscriptions suggest that they find them valuable.

Research alliances are long-term partnerships between districts and independent research entities — often universities but sometimes other education support organizations — to provide the technical analysis pertaining to pressing policy and practice issues. Large districts like Chicago and Baltimore tend to establish research alliances dedicated solely to their interests. Many research alliances manage (or at least can access) standard school data files from which they generate routine or special reports for members.

Researchers and practitioners often collaborate on identifying problems to study. Researchers conduct the research and funnel findings back to practitioners, but determination of how to apply the findings for solving local problems of practice is up to practitioners (Coburn et al., 2013, p. 8). Some big-city research alliances cite accomplishments that include successful implementation of multiple reforms (Roderick, Easton, & Sebring, 2009),

improved communication about reform (Connolly, Plank, & Rone, 2012), and provision of data for decision making (Farley, 2014).

Design research refers to long-term collaborations that link researchers from one or more universities to one or more schools or districts for simultaneously building and studying solutions to problems of practice. Often used to develop and test curricula or new instructional approaches, design research includes a focus on implementation from the outset. It values diverse perspectives, seeking out practitioners' declarative and tacit knowledge as well as expert input from a variety of relevant disciplines or fields.

Design research relies on practitioners to co-design research and execute it via rapid and repeated cycles of design, testing, redesign, and retesting of innovations. A major design research group reports accomplishments that include the adoption of new policies and the development of field-proven new products in science, adolescent literacy, and English language learning (Daro, 2014), while another reports success in building relationships and joint agendas (Bevan, 2015).

Networked improvement communities are consortia of schools or districts working with a hub — a university or an education support organization — to develop innovations robust enough for effective implementation and results in diverse settings. Networked improvement communities use rapid cycles to test facets of an innovation as it is being developed, then systematically increase the number and variety of settings in subsequent testing cycles. The idea is “to spread effective practices sooner and faster” (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, & LeMahieu, 2015, p.2).

In networked improvement communities, practitioners do the on-the-ground work of data collection and analysis in small-scale tests with facilitation by researchers who guide the overall improvement process (Coburn et al., 2013). Several studies report positive impacts on student results from networked improvement communities' work (Bryk et al., 2015; Lewis, 2015).

The five types fit roughly along a continuum from low to high intensity in terms of the demand that the partnership places on practitioners individually and institutionally. Demand encompasses time, labor (both the number of tasks and how much they deviate from the familiar and the routine), communication, and accountability (the degree of responsibility practitioners must shoulder for the work to get done).

In our analysis, communities of practice and study councils impose relatively low demand on practitioners; research alliances, moderate demand; and design research and networked improvement communities, high demand. Assuming that the study topics undertaken by the partnership are of high value to practitioners, the higher the investment required of practitioners, the greater the potential payoff in terms of professional learning and student results.

WHERE ARE THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE VARIOUS FORMS OF RESEARCH-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIPS?

Research-practice partnerships provide all participants with learning opportunities, arising from the nature of partnerships themselves. The more intensive types of partnerships generally require more active engagement from practitioners and expose practitioners to more novel tasks and material than less intensive types. Practitioners who also apply research findings — presumably even more than those who help conduct research — are more likely to “revise their internal representations of the world in light of new information” (Tseng & Nutley, 2014, p. 166). In other words, they gain deeper knowledge.

Experts and veterans of effective partnerships have come to appreciate that the development, transfer, and use of research-based knowledge in education are “not a simple process whereby research ‘facts’ are passed from researcher to research users and then applied in a linear decision-making process” (Tseng & Nutley, 2014, p. 165). Far from it.

The process is complex, conditional, and recursive because it entails “people individually and collectively engaging with research over time, bringing their own and their organizations' goals, motivations, routines, and political contexts with them” (Tseng & Nutley, 2014, p. 165). At a minimum, this process requires participants to build trust and establish norms and collaborative processes that pass into what Coburn and colleagues (2013) label “mutualism.” In this regard, research-practice partners have learning needs like those of new school-based professional learning communities and other kinds of partnerships (Killion, 2011).

However, research-practice partnerships may necessitate additional learning in order for researchers and practitioners with highly diverse professional preparation, methodologies, reward systems, and possibly reciprocal traditions of mutual mistrust to work together productively. Those learning needs grow when partners from other sectors, such as intermediaries, funders, and others, enter the mix.

Practitioners in productive partnerships can learn not only technical research language and methods, but also the value of researchers' perspectives, insights, and time frames. Moreover, practitioners in design research and networked improvement communities can also learn how to go forward with admittedly provisional knowledge as they do the on-the-ground work of repeated cycles of implementation, testing, and adjustment to refine an innovation. Researchers have much to learn from practitioners in these collaborations as well, including understanding the realities of the inner workings of schools and districts and how they cope with competing demands from federal and state policies, district and community expectations, and the like.

The more intensive types of research-practice partnerships — in which all participants take on new roles — potentially position participants for even greater learning. “All involved

are now improvers seeking to generate strong evidence about how to achieve better outcomes more reliably,” according to one set of experts who advocate for networked improvement communities (Bryk et al., 2015, p. 2). These partnerships confront researchers with the need to learn how to collaborate with practitioners and with researchers in disciplines not their own, as well as how to adhere to school-paced time frames.

Practitioners who are expected to co-design research plans or materials may also need to learn how to step into more formal research roles as data collectors, data analysts, reviewers (if not contributing authors) of research reports, co-developers of tools related to an innovation, and as research disseminators. Practitioners may also serve as data sources, perhaps contributing their explicit and tacit knowledge through unfamiliar research activities such as the creation of personas or scenarios. Researchers and practitioners alike may also find the need to exercise new levels of patience with partnership colleagues and themselves as all work toward developing competence and confidence in their new roles.

The new roles that participants assume sometimes grow into more permanent new professional identities. Especially in long-term mid- and high-intensity partnerships like research alliances and networked improvement communities, participants may engage with an improvement project and with a series of projects that span multiple years.

HOW DO RESEARCH-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIPS MAP ONTO THE STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING?

Despite the variation within and across the five types, we can sketch out how the professional learning embedded in research-practice partnerships maps onto Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning (2011).

Learning Communities

Research-practice partnerships are forms of learning communities. Long-term communities of practice and study councils may meet the standard’s criteria of collective collaboration, analysis, reflection, and inquiry. Research alliances, design research, and networked improvement communities — the more intensive partnerships — by definition provide “an ongoing system of support for continuous improvement and implementation of school and systemwide initiatives” (Learning Forward, 2011).

Networked improvement communities in particular surpass this standard’s stringent description of cross-community communication. When it comes to working “within and across both internal and external systems to support student learning,” though, all types of partnerships meet the criterion (Learning Forward, 2011). And, as noted earlier, all effective partnerships “strive to refine their collaboration, communication, and relationship skills” and “develop norms of collaboration and relational trust” (Learning Forward, 2011), just like other effective learning communities.

Leadership

This standard’s inclusive definition of leaders encompasses an array of individuals who may well provide leadership for professional learning within research-practice partnerships. On the one hand, the less intensive types of partnership (communities of practice, study councils, and some research alliances) focus more fully on setting a professional learning agenda that aligns with classroom, school, and system goals than do more intensive types.

On the other hand, opportunities for practitioners to share leadership may be more pronounced in the more intensive types of partnership (some research alliances, design research collaborations, and networked improvement communities) because they expect practitioners — as all participants — to take on new roles and contribute to all phases of the work, which could include the leadership tasks that the standard delineates.

Resources

Resources for professional learning may raise issues for practitioners’ participation in research-practice partnerships. While partnerships may have access to funds or in-kind support for their activities, three resource issues often arise with the types that demand a greater commitment of practitioners’ time and effort: how practitioners will fit the additional tasks of their partnership involvement into their existing workloads; the extent to which practitioners control the partnership’s resources; and the availability of adequate fiscal, cultural, and technical resources to implement learnings from the partnership in local settings.

Data

A commitment to data-based or evidence-based practice underlies all types of research-practice partnerships, but they vary in their use of “multiple sources . . . of student, educator, and system performance” (Learning Forward, 2011) to determine professional learning needs. Most partnership types consult performance indicators to identify prospective topics for study or innovations needed.

Communities of practice and study councils may or may not include the identification of professional learning needs in the research or study they undertake. The research partners in some of these less intensive partnerships consider the identification of professional learning needs to be outside their purview once they produce their technical analysis. They let policymakers interpret and apply their findings and determine professional learning needs associated with implementation. Research alliances can fall somewhere in between and are generally concerned with application of findings and the identification of professional learning needs.

Design research and networked improvement communities are centrally concerned with successful implementation of an innovation in diverse settings. These partnerships are highly

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE STEM Ecosystems

<http://stemecosystems.org>

The STEM Ecosystems Initiative is built on over a decade of research into successful STEM collaborations and seeks to nurture and scale effective science, technology, engineering, and math learning opportunities for all young people.

This initiative encompasses 27 communities of practice selected from across the United States to form the initial cohort of a national community of practice. Each participating community demonstrated cross-sector collaborations to deliver rigorous, effective pre-K-16 instruction in STEM learning. These collaborations happen in schools and beyond the classroom — in after-school and summer programs, at home, in science centers, libraries, and other places both virtual and physical.

To support the design

EXAMPLES OF RESEARCH-PARTNERSHIP TYPES

and implementation of STEM Learning Ecosystems across the country, a team of STEM and cross-sector collaboration experts provides technical assistance tailored to each community. The initiative matches each site with a consultant based on the site's specific needs.

The consultant supports the development and implementation of each STEM Learning Ecosystem. However, the focus is on establishing and maintaining a peer-to-peer professional learning network for communities to share information and expertise. This initiative was recently recognized as innovative by the U.S. Department of Education (<http://innovation.ed.gov/2015/11/19/communities-come-together-to-support-stem-education>).

STUDY COUNCIL

New Jersey School Development Council
<http://njsdc.gse.rutgers.edu/Home>

Headquartered in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers University, the New Jersey School Development Council is a cooperative, not-for-profit network of educational agencies and school districts that explores emerging issues relevant to leadership in education.

The council provides educational leadership in New Jersey through conferences on topics of emerging concern, a leadership institute on strategies for school improvement, and other activities. In addition, the council offers professional development strands in specific areas in conjunction with

faculty and staff from Rutgers Graduate School of Education, local school district personnel, and national consultants. Topics for each year's program are chosen from an annual needs assessment of the membership conducted in the spring.

RESEARCH ALLIANCE
University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research
<https://consortium.uchicago.edu>

Since its establishment in 1990, the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research has had the dual goals of conducting research that Chicago Public Schools can use to improve student achievement and that simultaneously contributes to the school reform field.

The consortium provides a research-based framework and technical analysis — evidence that tests theories and hypotheses, but does not

likely to attend to professional learning needs for implementation, based on data from the many trials they conduct during design and development of the innovation.

Learning Designs

Research-practice partnerships as a group arguably represent job-embedded learning as defined in the Learning Designs standard. On the low-intensity end of the research-practice partnership continuum, communities of practice and study councils look a lot like study groups. The more intensive types of partnership — research alliances, design research, and networked improvement communities — may incorporate qualities of study groups in addition to action research, inquiry into practice, and problem-based learning.

Research-practice partnerships also develop a collaborative culture and support for the transfer of learning to practice, as the standard prescribes. The more intense forms of research-practice partnership join peer accountability to collaboration and “facilitate ongoing communication about learning” (Learning Forward, 2011).

Some research-practice partnerships also fit within the stan-

dard's select learning designs in that they entail application and a more complete understanding of theoretical as well as practical components of an innovation (Learning Forward, 2011). Again, it is the more intensive types of partnership that also promote the kind of active engagement of practitioners in “inquiry... [and] co-construction of knowledge” that the standard lays out (Learning Forward, 2011).

The qualifier in this standard for job-embedded learning to take place during the workday (Learning Forward, 2011) may apply to teachers only for some activities associated with some research-practice partnerships. This part of the standard applies more readily to administrators and other nonclassroom staff in these partnerships due to the presumed greater elasticity of their workday.

Implementation

The more intensive types of partnership conform most uniformly to the Implementation standard's expectation that learning will be applied. It is important to remember, however, that professional learning is not necessarily the key objective for these partnerships: They focus on design and development

provide answers — for the use of educators and the larger education community. Its research agenda over the past five years, for example, centered on rigor and readiness in high schools, middle schools and the transition to high school, human capital and professional capacity, and schools as organizations.

In addition, the consortium researches high-priority topics that the Chicago Public Schools and other constituents in the area's education community identify. The consortium develops indicators and analyses of trends in Chicago Public Schools, along with confidential reports for individual schools on aspects of their conditions, operations, and outcomes. The consortium also helps enhance educators' capacity to use data effectively.

DESIGN RESEARCH Strategic Education Research Partnership Institute

www.serpoinstitute.org

The institute grew out of work at the National Academy of Sciences in 2003 to provide the infrastructure for the research, development, and implementation of solutions to the critical problems of practice in individual districts. In design research partnerships, the institute reaches into multiple universities and disciplines for the expertise to respond to each district's selected problems of practice, while the institute's national headquarters staff takes care of overall management functions that include quality control, communication, finance, and long-term planning.

During a district's engagement with the institute, envisioned as a long-term relationship, district personnel join institute staff and experts

on three tiers of teams: a core group of leaders for executive oversight; an ideas team with direct knowledge of the focal problem for more precise framing, imagining of solutions, and review of the work done by the research, development, and implementation teams; and teams for carrying out the design and testing cycles.

NETWORKED IMPROVEMENT COMMUNITIES

**Building A Teacher
Effectiveness Network**
www.carnegiefoundation.org/in-action/bten

Building a Teacher Effectiveness Network is a relatively recent initiative to develop and retain teachers during their first three years in the profession. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching serves as its hub by providing overall guidance and facilitation. The network's

school district members between 2011 and 2015 were the Austin Independent School District with 19 participating schools and Baltimore City Schools, along with the American Federation of Teachers, New Visions for Public Schools, and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement.

Key tools include a driver diagram and adoption of Plan, Do, Study, Act cycles. Once the network narrowed its focus to the quality of feedback new teachers receive on their teaching and the support they perceive from their principals, the network engaged experts, teachers, principals, and other school-based staff in developing a new protocol for feedback and support that was then subjected to small-scale cycles of testing and refinement in both districts. The network is currently developing strategies and tools to improve district systems of support for new teachers.

to ready an innovation for implementation on a broad scale.

The rapid, repeated cycles of implementation, testing, and refinement of a particular product that are the hallmark of design research and networked improvement communities tend not to occur over time (even if the partnership extends over time) and not to provide the ongoing support that this standard envisions. The standard's time frame of three to five years for broad, sustained implementation may be in the overall picture for these partnerships, but is not their immediate objective.

Outcomes

Research-practice partnerships and the standards agree on student results as the ultimate outcome. Ideally, all partnership types target problems of practice that both aim for this outcome and are salient for practitioners.

Study councils and research alliances frame their work around problems of practice that practitioners identify or that practitioners and researchers collaboratively identify. Design research and networked improvement communities tend to focus on outcomes of mutual interest in the form of practical solutions.

HOW CAN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING LEADERS MAXIMIZE THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF LEARNING FOR THE PRACTITIONERS IN RESEARCH-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIPS?

Research-practice partnerships give professional learning leaders a venue for professional learning that complements other means of increasing educator effectiveness and results for all students. Though the five types of research-practice partnerships discussed here vary a great deal in where and which kinds of professional learning opportunities they embed, professional learning leaders can maximize the quality and quantity of professional learning opportunities in research-practice partnerships. Here are some ways that they might do so:

- Make decision makers aware of the professional learning opportunities embedded in various types of research-practice partnerships.
- Help policymakers vet potential research-practice partnerships by analyzing the advantages and disadvantages, and the costs and benefits, in terms of professional learning opportunities.
- Contribute to shaping the research and learning agenda of research-practice partnerships by providing input on prac-

tioners' learning needs and best practices in professional learning.

- Seek out research-practice partnerships that align well with the professional learning needs of educators as well as the needs of students and the system.
- Ensure that participating practitioners and researchers are aware of the professional learning opportunities embedded in research-practice partnerships and the importance of ensuring that they meet Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning to the extent possible.
- Offer ideas on how professional learning opportunities within research-practice partnerships can be more effective in supporting practitioners who participate and in reaching a greater number of practitioners by using more powerful learning designs.
- Inform the evaluation of research-practice partnerships by ensuring that evaluation measures reflect the Standards for Professional Learning and ensuring the variables measured are sufficiently varied to capture potential impacts across different realms, by joining evaluation teams, and by giving feedback on evaluation efforts.

MAKING THE MOST OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN RESEARCH-PARTNERSHIPS

The five types of research-practice partnerships discussed here engage researchers, practitioners, and sometimes others in the consumption or the creation of evidence-based solutions to problems of practice. Ranging from the less intensive communities of practice and study councils, to moderately intensive research alliances, to highly intensive design research and networked improvement communities, these partnerships differ in the extent to which their embedded learning opportunities meet Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning.

Yet all five types of partnerships have in common the potential to generate effective professional learning for participating practitioners. The challenge for professional learning leaders is to ensure that practitioners are involved with partnerships best suited to their goals, time frame, and expectations, and then that they get the most and best learning out of the partnership. The strategies offered here give professional learning leaders a place to start on claiming research-practice partnerships as a high-impact venue for professional learning.

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Learning Forward's Coaches Academy



Effective instructional coaches are invaluable resources in any learning system. Coaches have the power to influence teaching, student learning, and school culture. If your system has instructional coaches, are you providing them the support they need to be true professional learning leaders?

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BEYOND THE WORKSHOP

As more educators and school systems transform their expectations for what professional learning can and should be — and demand meaningful outcomes as a result — traditional models of professional development become less frequent. While a workshop has its place, given appropriate goals and follow-up, professional learning encompasses so much more when it is conceived in ways that serve the learning needs of educators and students.



The “If not a workshop, then what?” list on p. 55 is a popular bookmark and tool for Learning Forward members and learning leaders to use in conversations in school-based teams, with central office staff, and with community members invested in school improvement. At right, we offer nine suggestions for use.

IF NOT A WORKSHOP, THEN WHAT?

9 SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THE BOOKMARK LIST

COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Often, community members have a narrow understanding of what constitutes professional development. Raise awareness with this audience using the “If not a workshop, then what?” list with community members by:

1. Sharing the list in email communications with a short overview of how your school or district is building capacity of teachers and administrators.
2. Distributing the list at a school family night with a short presentation by a leadership team. Offer examples of how teachers have used specific strategies on the list and what the outcomes have been.
3. Using the list as a discussion starter in a parent-teacher organization meeting as part of expanding parents’ understanding of effective professional learning

BUILD LEARNING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY AMONG EDUCATORS



Both novice and experienced learning leaders likely draw upon many learning strategies to plan professional learning for themselves and others. The “If not a workshop, then what?” list can be valuable for considering what additional strategies might offer a novel approach for addressing a learning need. Starting points could include:

1. Asking each member of a central office learning leadership team to briefly study five of the items on the list and offer a short explanation to the team on where the strategy fits in a larger learning agenda.
2. Using the list in principal learning opportunities to help school leaders build their knowledge of what learning strategies could support teacher growth in their buildings.
3. Engaging coaches in an effort to bank examples from the list of professional learning in action that demonstrate how different strategies have been valuable in changing educator practices.

ADVOCATE FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING

Board members and policymakers will also benefit from understanding the diversity of learning strategies that help educators improve. Use the “If not a workshop, then what?” list with these audiences to:

1. Build awareness of potential rich educator learning with explanations from teachers about how they’ve used different strategies and what the results have been.
2. Discuss how investments in different types of professional learning have had meaningful outcomes versus a one-size-fits all approach that can’t meet a range of needs.
3. Demonstrate that education professionals use strategies that have parallel uses in other fields.

1. Engage in a **cycle of inquiry** with a team.
2. Conduct **action research**.
3. Participate in a **Twitter** chat.
4. Pursue additional **certifications** or degrees.
5. Examine **student data**.
6. Lead a **book study**.
7. Do a classroom or school **walk-through**.
8. **Plan lessons** with colleagues.
9. **Shadow** a student, a teacher, or another professional.
10. Learn with the support of a **coach**.
11. Give **presentations** at conferences.
12. Participate in **lesson study**.
13. Write **assessments** with colleagues.
14. Be a **mentor** or be mentored.
15. Join an online or face-to-face **network**.
16. Consult an **expert**.
17. Create new teaching **resources**.
18. **Write** an article about your work.
19. Participate in a **Critical Friends Group**.
20. **Read** journals, magazines, blogs, books.
21. **Video** your own teaching.
22. Invite colleagues to **observe** you.
23. Keep a reflective **blog** or **journal**.
24. Maintain a professional **portfolio**.
25. Attend or lead **webinars**.
26. **Advocate** for your profession.
27. Observe a **model lesson**.
28. Attend an in-depth **institute** in a content area.
29. Participate in school improvement **planning**.
30. Study **content standards** for your state.
31. **Coach** a colleague.
32. Enroll in a **university** course.
33. Develop team facilitation **skills**.
34. Join a cadre of in-school or in-district **trainers**.
35. Share teaching **successes** with board and community members.



Implementation fidelity affects the degree of change in teacher practice

WHAT THE STUDY SAYS

School improvement that depends on professional development as a primary means for implementing effective instructional practice requires deliberate attention to implementation fidelity of both the content and process of professional development, the ongoing development of professional developers, and the measurement of implementation over time.

When schools have high-fidelity implementation of the professional development principles of both professional development content and process, teachers have significantly higher frequency of implementation of instructional practices aligned with the reform program than schools that were low in implementation or those that had high levels in one and low levels in another.

Study description

In their longitudinal study of fidelity of implementation of principles

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

Implementation fidelity of principles of professional development content and processes associated with school reform instructional practice improvements positively affects the degree of change in teacher practice.

THE STUDY

Kisa, Z. & Correnti, R. (2015). Examining implementation fidelity in America's Choice schools: A longitudinal analysis of changes in professional development associated with changes in teacher practice. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 37(4), 437-457.

of reform-aligned professional development content and process, Kisa and Correnti examine teacher reform-aligned teaching practices at the end of the fourth year of implementation of writing instruction improvements in 31 America's Choice schools. America's Choice is a comprehensive school reform program focused on helping students achieve global benchmarks in English language arts. Some of the 31 schools had been implementing some aspects of America's Choice before the beginning of this longitudinal study.

The study's design is based on five propositions:

1. Traditional workshop-style professional development is insufficient for inspiring change in teacher practice.
2. Scaling reforms beyond boutique studies opens up greater possibility for variation in implementing professional development.
3. The more ambitious the instructional practices are, the more likely variation in implementation

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PRACTITIONERS

Whole-school improvement depends on teachers' capacity to implement associated instructional practices. Such reform requires professional learning to align teaching with the reform being implemented. The principles driving America's Choice professional development content and process are drawn from the same research that undergirds Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011).

This study demonstrates that attention to both the content and process of professional learning is equally important in supporting teachers' implementation of new instructional practices and that the professional learning is sufficiently sustained over time to achieve high levels of implementation.

The study also illuminates the complexity of measuring implementation of content and process and expected changes. Researchers stress that specifying the theory of change and a clearly delineated logic model to operationalize the content, process, and expected changes as well as the expected content and process and how they might change over time requires reform leaders to

will be large both because it is hard to communicate abstract principles associated with ambitious instruction and because those responsible for implementing reforms will need to learn as well as teach the reforms.

4. It is important to measure implementation fidelity, but its operationalization is difficult.
5. Examining change longitudinally and focusing on specific teaching practices targeted by the reform are important for demonstrating effects of professional development

describe with explicitly measurable specificity what those changes are.

These findings are strongly aligned with the **Outcomes** (content), **Learning Designs** (process), and **Data** (evaluation) standards of Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011).

When the outcomes of professional learning are clearly delineated and aligned to research- and evidence-based practices and students' expected learning outcomes, and when the learning designs employ powerful strategies for both developing content knowledge and supporting transfer to practice — including training, coaching, and other forms of personalized, classroom-based supports, access to appropriate curriculum, and opportunities to plan instruction — the level of implementation of the desired change in practice is higher.

In addition, being able to measure the rate of change and the consistency of the professional learning treatment provides important data to adjust its implementation to achieve greater effects in changes in teacher practice.

Reference

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

programs as well as for reinforcing an important principle for professional development research (p. 439).

Using survey data of teacher perceptions collected from teachers more than a decade ago, the researchers measured changes in implementation fidelity of professional development content and process as well as frequency of teacher implementation of reform-aligned instructional practice.

Questions

Researchers sought to answer three

questions:

1. To what extent do schools differ in their rate of change in implementation fidelity of professional development content over four years?
2. To what extent do schools differ in their rate of change in implementation fidelity of professional development process over four years?
3. To what extent do changes in providing reform-aligned professional development content and process predict teachers' reform-aligned instructional practices in the last year of the study and the growth rate in reform-aligned teaching practice over the course of the study?

Methodology

Researchers tapped extant data from 1,722 literacy teachers in 31 schools from previous studies (2000-04) of America's Choice to answer the three research questions. Subjects responded to at least one survey annually for four years, thereby permitting longitudinal analyses.

Researchers selected these schools because they held constant for the duration of the study a desire to implement instructional practices associated with the writing process and chose to use America's Choice professional development theory of change and principles as the primary vehicle for making the changes in English language arts instructional practice.

Constructs included three distinct variables. The first, reform-aligned professional development content marker, assessed the degree to which teachers perceived that the content of both formal and informal professional development improved their knowledge of the writing process. Researchers drew a mean score from four survey questions whose range was 1 (never) to 5 (more than 10 times).

The second construct is reform-aligned professional development process marker, which assessed teachers' perceptions about how often:

1. They observed the instructional leader (coach, professional developer, facilitator, etc.) modeling the instructional practices;
2. The leader observed them teaching and provided feedback about ways to improve their instruction;
3. The leader observed them and gave them feedback about their use of the curriculum materials; and
4. The leader examined student work and commented on ways to improve it.

The third construct researchers measured was reform-aligned teaching practices. Using four questions, the survey asked teachers' perceptions about how often they employed practices aligned with reform-aligned writing instruction, how often written composition was the primary focus of their instruction, how often students integrated writing into reading, and how often students wrote an individual paragraph or connected piece of two or more paragraphs.

Researchers controlled for several teacher-level (gender, experience, etc.) and school-level (socioeconomic status, school achievement, etc.) covariates to examine their effects on the outcomes.

Analysis

Researchers applied two distinct three-level hierarchical linear models to answer the first two research questions about teachers' perceptions of changes in their professional development over time. Teachers' individual scores were nested inside school scores, and school scores were aggregated among participating schools. The models examined the variability in change in adherence to the content and process principles of professional development.

To answer the third research question, researchers clustered schools into four groups based on the

conditional empirical Bayes residuals for schools from the linear growth parameters. The groups were high growth in both content and process (high-high); high growth in content and low in process (high-low); low growth in content and high in process (low-high); and low growth in both content and process (low-low).

To determine if changes in professional development resulted in changes in teaching practice, researchers applied dummy variables based on the four clusters of schools in a three-level hierarchical linear growth model in which reform-aligned teaching practice was the outcome. This model allowed researchers to examine the relationship among teachers' change in practice with schools' level of fidelity to professional development content and process principles.

Results

The research findings provide insight into the effects of level of fidelity of professional development content and process on teaching practices. There was statistically significant variability in participating America's Choice schools' level of adherence to reform-aligned professional development content ($p < .001$) and reform-aligned professional development process ($p < .001$) principles.

This means that some schools provided higher levels of reform-aligned content and adhered more consistently with process at the end of the study. Over the duration of the study, the content of all professional development decreased in all schools at various rates, some declining more slowly than others.

This finding suggests that the earliest years — in this study, the first year — was the year in which teachers had greatest opportunity to improve their content knowledge about writing. The decrease in adherence to process principles was not as dramatic as the decrease in content, suggesting that

the process of professional learning — including training, coaching, and focus on implementation of curriculum — is sustained for a longer period of time.

Overall, participating schools implemented the professional development content and process reforms at differing levels of fidelity, which influenced the degree of change in reform-aligned teaching practice.

High-level adherence to professional development content and process principles is related to significantly higher frequency enactment of reform-aligned instructional practices at the end of the study. Teachers in high-high schools had significantly higher frequency use of the instructional practices than teachers in high-low, low-high, and low-low schools. This suggests that adherence to content or process without adherence to the other influences changes in teacher practice.

Results also suggest that when the professional development content and process adhere to the reform principles for content, the rate of change in the frequency of implementing reform-aligned teaching practices is greater. The rate of decrease in adherence is not significantly related to the change in

teaching practices.

The model accounted for 61% of the variance in reform-aligned teaching practice among schools in their last year of the study. Researchers also tested for the effects of other school and teacher covariates, such as prior achievement, number of years of implementing the reform, and teacher knowledge and efficacy. Adding the covariates to the model accounted for 84% of the variance.

The study concludes that only high-high schools were successful in increasing the frequency of teachers' enactment of reform-aligned teaching practices over the course of the study's four years, while all other schools experienced consistent tapering off of reform-aligned teaching practices over the course of the study.

Limitations

Researchers identify a number of limitations of the study.

1. The study relies on self-report data from teachers using specified survey questions for professional development content and process without examining other variables of professional development that

may influence implementation of teacher practice.

2. The study lacks baseline data about teacher practice. The study focuses on schools that had already initiated the reform intervention, with several having multiple years of implementation before the beginning of this study.
3. Because the study examines only one comprehensive school reform program (America's Choice) that uses professional development as the primary vehicle for change, the results are narrowly generalizable to schoolwide reform efforts that seek to improve instructional practice as a means to improve student achievement.
4. The study's design permits only findings of association rather than causation.
5. The study provides no evidence of impact on student achievement. Given that change in teacher practice is a precursor to improvement in student achievement, it would be helpful to examine longitudinally the effects on student learning. ■

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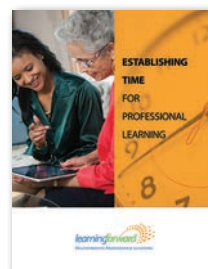


Establishing Time for Collaborative Professional Learning

A new online course from Learning Forward

**www.
learningforward.
org/online**

LEARN HOW TO BUILD TIME INTO THE SCHOOL DAY SO TEACHERS CAN LEARN AND WORK TOGETHER TO IMPROVE THEIR PRACTICE.



Participants receive a digital copy of *Establishing Time for Professional Learning*.

Learning Forward launches community of practice

Learning Forward has launched the Redesign PD Community of Practice to support 20 of the nation's leading school districts and charter management organizations in addressing systemwide educator and student learning priorities.

The community engages teams from the districts in identifying their local professional learning challenges and then creating scalable solutions. Learning Forward serves as the facilitator and coordinator of the community, offering expertise and support during face-to-face and virtual meetings.

The community provides focus, guidance, and shared accountability to the participating systems to make dramatic improvements to their professional development systems.

Collectively, the participating systems enroll more than 5% of the public school students in the country and the community offers a strong path to improving professional learning at a national scale.

Further, Learning Forward will capture and publish lessons learned and tools from the community to share with the broader field

of education, especially to Learning Forward's more than 50,000 members and stakeholders.

PARTICIPATING DISTRICTS AND CHARTER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

- Aspire Public Schools
- Bridgeport Public Schools (Connecticut)
- District of Columbia Public Schools
- Denver Public Schools (Colorado)
- Fresno Unified School District (California)
- Fulton County Schools (Georgia)
- Hillsborough County Public Schools (Florida)
- Jefferson County Public Schools (Colorado)
- Knox County Schools (Tennessee)
- Lake County Schools (Florida)
- Long Beach Public Schools (California)
- Loudon County Schools (Tennessee)
- New Haven Public Schools (Connecticut)
- New York City Department of Education (New York)
- Pittsburgh Public Schools (Pennsylvania)
- Prince George's County Public Schools (Maryland)
- Riverside Unified School District (California)
- Syracuse City School District (New York)
- Shelby County Schools (Tennessee)
- Tulsa Public Schools (Oklahoma)

"Equitable access to powerful teaching remains one of our nation's critical challenges," said Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward. "While we know that effective professional learning is the means to increase that access, we haven't found the answer for ensuring that all teachers in all systems experience the learning that will help them reach and teach all students. I'm excited that our district partners in this community are joining with us to create solutions that will work both locally and across multiple contexts."

Many of the participating school districts have already created professional learning innovations and programs that result in changes in educator practice and improvements in student learning. They have received funding support for their past work from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which also funds the Redesign PD Community of Practice.

The community assists systems in not only building on previous successes but also examining what works and what doesn't to support teachers in

continually improving their practice in implementing rigorous college- and career-ready standards.

Over the course of 18 months, district teams in the community of practice engage in continuous improvement cycles to improve how they manage their professional learning systems, with each team conducting multiple inquiry cycles to propel rapid learning and improvement. Complementing this inquiry work are opportunities to problem solve collectively with other districts in the community. District teams serve as critical friends to one another, sharing expertise and demanding mutual accountability.

"The sheer volume of expertise in this community gives me such confidence that we'll find really practical solutions for learning leaders," Hirsh said. "These district innovators navigate an extraordinary number of priorities to focus on what will ultimately make a difference for students. It's a very complex task, and I'm proud of the role the community will play in moving everyone forward."

AT A GLANCE Redesign PD Community of Practice

- 20 school systems
- More than 3,700 schools
- 2.3 million students
- More than 164,000 certified educators
- \$500 million to \$1 billion in professional development spending
- 10 states represented

For more information: www.learningforward.org/learning-opportunities/redesign-pd-community-of-practice.



Keep these essentials at the ready for the next challenge

As a young boy in Colorado, I spent much of my time exploring, hiking, and climbing the Rocky Mountains. I learned early on the importance of being prepared for the elements. For instance, I knew I would always have in my backpack a way to start a fire, a knife, a compass, rain gear, and water. With my essentials at the ready, I could take on the next exciting challenge.

For a new professional developer, it is equally important to have certain essentials. Here are three I have carried with me over the years.

1. BUILD RELATIONSHIPS EARLY.

This saying rings true for educators working together: “They do not care how much you know until they know how much you care.” Professional learning is a highly personal process. It often involves taking risks and can stir emotions.

As a learning leader, take the time to get to know the people you are supporting. Listen to their stories and meet them where they are. Enter conversations with a positive presupposition. I noticed a participant in one learning session spend the first 20 minutes on email. After inquiring, I learned that her son had been in a car accident earlier that week and she was checking in with his doctor.

John Eyolfson is president of Learning Forward's board of trustees.

on board JOHN EYOLFSON

2. EMBRACE AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE PROCESS OF CHANGE.

Being an educator will always include an element of changing landscapes. Educators are expected to model the process of being lifelong learners as they look to improve their practice. There are several research-based models that not only describe various stages of change, but also have strategies for how to support teachers effectively and efficiently through these stages.

Shirley Hord and Gene Hall developed one model that I rely on often — the Concerns-Based Adoption Model, which recognizes the distinct stages that occur as adults build readiness for a change by moving through awareness to collaboration and refocusing. Having the knowledge and skills to manage the change process is an important tool when providing support, coaching, and professional development to other educators.

3. CLARIFY THE GOAL.

Early on in my career as a professional developer, I was introduced to KASAB, a framework for establishing outcomes. KASAB stands for knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations, and behaviors.

In each learning situation, the goal

is to provide a change. The question is: What are we trying to change? If the goal is to increase learners' knowledge, design a rich learning experience with that in mind. Throughout the process, create opportunities for participants to demonstrate their knowledge, and make sure the evaluation gathers evidence of participants' knowledge acquisition.

This same process applies if the desired change involves skills, aspirations, attitudes, or behaviors. Design learning appropriate for the outcome desired. Often we use a knowledge-oriented approach when we intend changes in skills or behaviors. Without the opportunity for practice and feedback to develop new skills, nothing changes.

Just as I still turn to those first essentials I load in my backpack each time I go for a hike, I also rely on these and other professional learning essentials no matter how much I continue to learn about leading professional learning. What essentials do you put in your tool kit? ■



Foundation announces 2016 award winners

The Learning Forward Foundation, which supports the development of educators' capacity to improve student learning through innovation and

For more information: www.learningforward.org/foundation.

improvement that transform professional learning, has announced the 2016 winners of its scholarships and grants.

Learning Forward Foundation Academy Scholarship supports participation in the Learning Forward Academy for one school-based and one district-based practitioner. Awarded to: **Andrea Von Biberstein**, Ridgeville Charter Middle School, Atlanta,

Georgia; **Anna Jackson**, Lubbock (Texas) ISD.

Patsy Hochman Academy Scholarship supports participation in the Learning Forward Academy. Awarded to: **Shannon Terry**, Arlington (Texas) ISD.

The Principal as a Leader of Professional Learning Scholarship will assist an already effective principal to strengthen his or her leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions to improve the outcomes of professional learning for staff resulting in improved student learning outcomes. Awarded to: **Kelly Hastings**, Young Junior High School, Arlington, Texas.

Learning Forward Foundation Team Grant supports teams in an effort

to advance Learning Forward's vision: Excellent teaching and learning every day. Awarded to: **Northern Valley High School District**, Demarest, New Jersey.

Learning Forward Foundation Affiliate Grant provides an affiliate the opportunity to further its work in professional learning within its respective state/region/province. Awarded to: **Learning Forward Nebraska**.

Learning Forward Foundation System Grant is a partnership grant that will provide an opportunity for a district team to develop and implement a comprehensive learning system throughout the district. Awarded to: **Hartford (Connecticut) Public Schools**.



Photo by SALLY J. HAMMOND

Carver's leadership team receives Learning School Designation. From left: Russell Booker, district superintendent; Chris Winkler, assistant principal; Jill Brock, instructional coach; Darrell Barringer, AdvancED; Nicole Thompson, principal; Janice Poda, Learning Forward; Lisa Foster, instructional coach; and Terry Pruitt, deputy superintendent.

CARVER MIDDLE SCHOOL RECEIVES FIRST LEARNING SCHOOL DESIGNATION

Carver Middle School in Spartanburg, South Carolina, is the first recipient of the Learning School Designation, which identifies a school as a model for results-driven, standards-based, and job-embedded professional learning.

Learning Forward collaborates with

AdvancED to offer this designation to recognize those schools that prioritize high-quality continuous professional learning as a critical school improvement strategy.

"The leadership team at Carver Middle School has demonstrated that they hold learning for educators as a top

priority, and that commitment will reap results for all learners in the school," says Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward.

To learn more about the Learning School Designation, visit www.learningforward.org/get-involved/learning-school-designation.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN ESSA: 3 NEXT STEPS

With the recent release of the U.S. Department of Education's draft regulations for implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Learning Forward is encouraging educators to offer their input during the comment period, noting three points in particular that relate to professional learning.

1. The draft regulations include a requirement for consolidated state plans to describe states' systems for educator development, retention, and advancement, including how the state will ensure that each local educational agency "has and is implementing a system of professional growth and improvement for teachers, principals, and other school leaders," according to the draft regulations. ESSA has elevated professional learning in a unique and significant way, requiring states to address how they will leverage professional learning in the law's implementation.

Highlighting such systems in regulations is valuable to effective implementation of the law. Learning Forward will say so in its comments and is inviting members to do the same. "Prioritizing effective professional learning is paramount for achieving the outcomes all stakeholders want for children," says Stephanie Hirsh, Learning Forward's executive director. "States and districts will only achieve the law's aspirations for equity and excellence for all students if they offer teachers and school leaders systems of sustained support for growth."

2. Learning Forward is urging the U.S. Department of Education to additionally specify in its regulations

that professional development align with the definition of professional development outlined in the law itself. The definition states clearly that professional development is "sustained (not stand-alone, 1-day, or short term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused" and can encompass many strategies and content areas aligned to student and teacher needs.

"Unfortunately, the learning that most educators experience is not yet aligned to this definition, despite evidence from research and practice that

excellence if regulations encourage a more coherent approach to professional development. State plans can describe states' vision for professional learning and how they intend to use all available federal funding sources to achieve it. Often, Title II funding is treated independently of other Titles and state and local funding sources, leading to parallel or competing systems of support.

Through its regulations, the U.S. Department of Education can encourage states to think differently and establish a coherent system that is

TO READ THE DRAFT REGULATIONS:
<https://federalregister.gov/a/2016-12451>

TO COMMENT:
www.federalregister.gov/articles/2016/05/31/2016-12451/elementary-and-secondary-education-act-of-1965-as-amended-by-the-every-student-succeeds#open-comment

indicates these elements are essential for professional learning to achieve its intended outcomes," Hirsh says. Given the inclusion of the definition in the law, Learning Forward will ask that regulations specify that professional learning align with the definition in order to have its full impact. Learning Forward is urging members to consider doing the same.

3. Learning Forward and its partners continue to elevate the importance of coherent systems of professional learning that are grounded in evidence, adequately supported, and designed to achieve the goals of equity and excellence. Learning Forward believes the consolidated plans can spur advancement to educational

relevant to educators. Learning Forward is urging members to join in asking that the regulations help states conceive a coherent system, aligning its state and district visions for teacher and student learning and detailing how it will use its federal dollars to support such a system.

"Learning Forward appreciates the opportunity to continue to engage with the Department of Education to shape effective implementation of ESSA," says Hirsh. "I urge you to offer your input on the regulations, consider the requests we outline here, and most importantly, use this opportunity to reinforce the critical role effective professional learning systems play in achieving ambitious goals for all students."

The comment period will be open until August 1.



LEARNING FORWARD'S VISION:

Excellent teaching and learning every day.

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New study will examine professional learning in Canada

In collaboration with Canadian researchers and education stakeholders, Learning Forward has launched a research study examining the state of professional learning across Canada. The study's purpose is to understand the current landscape of educator professional learning throughout Canada and to advance a priority focus on the elements of and conditions for effective professional learning in Canada and across the world.

"Just as we aim for all students to have equitable access to quality education, our goal is to provide research results that will support educators in experiencing high-quality, evidence-informed professional learning within and across the provinces and territories of Canada and internationally," said Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward.

Carol Campbell, principal researcher for the study, said, "While Canada is internationally recognized as valuing education and committing to both excellence and equity, there is a gap in shared knowledge about the

professional learning practices that contribute to improved educational outcomes within and across Canada and in the unique and diverse contexts of each province and territory."

Campbell, associate professor of leadership and educational change at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, continued, "This study will significantly expand what we know about the learning educators are experiencing within Canada and how their learning opportunities compare to that of educators in other high-performing nations."

This research study will investigate promising learning practices, opportunities, and challenges and amplify the system conditions essential to effective professional learning. The project will culminate in a call to action at Learning Forward's 2016 Annual Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, to champion the importance of educators' professional learning in and across Canada, within a wider context of international evidence and experiences.

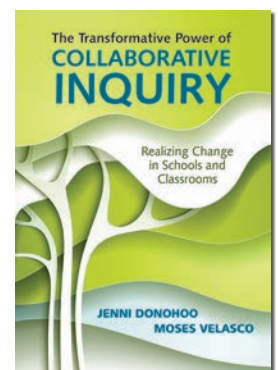
book club

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY:
Realizing Change in Schools and Classrooms
By Jenni Donohoo and Moses Velasco

This guide helps school leaders shape the development of a sustainable professional learning culture with practical suggestions and in-depth research. A follow-up to Jenni Donohoo's *Collaborative Inquiry for Educators: A Facilitator's Guide to School Improvement*, the authors explore:

- A rationale and framework for engaging in inquiry;
- The vital conditions needed to ensure systemwide collaboration; and
- Common pitfalls and the four stages of school improvement.

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 July 15. For more information about this or any membership package, call **800-727-7288** or email **office@learningforward.org**.



Best practice takeaways

A recent study highlights a pattern of common professional learning practices across four high-performing education systems. In the Winter 2016 issue of *Tools for Learning Schools*, Joellen Killion explores those practices and considers related factors that embed learning in schools each day.

The accompanying tool can be used with teams of teacher leaders and school and district leadership teams to facilitate conversations about the responsibilities of learning leaders and how such leaders can focus more specifically on professional learning.

Also available for download is a facilitator guide with a comprehensive set of tools to unpack and apply findings from the research study explored in this issue of *Tools for Learning Schools*.

www.learningforward.org/publications/tools-for-learning-schools/tools-for-learning-schools/2016/04/11/tools-for-learning-schools-winter-2016-vol.-19-no.-2

The Learning Catalog

The 2016 Learning Forward Bookstore catalog is organized into sections to make it easy to find the professional learning titles and resources you need. Browse through new titles, featured selections, member favorites, back issues of *JSD*, online course listings, and more.

New this year are icons indicating when Learning Forward offers related content, including webinars, free chapter previews, articles or blog posts online, institutes, or session at the 2016 conference.

Learning Forward members save 20% on bookstore purchases.

www.learningforward.org/docs/default-source/pdf/bookstore_catalog_2016.pdf



Oxford Bibliographies: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Explore an annotated bibliography of current and classic research literature about professional development. Updated earlier this year, this summary of dozens of research studies will help graduate students, education scholars, professional development leaders, practitioners, and facilitators navigate the landscape of scholarship about effective professional development activities, policies, and structures that contribute to a system of professional learning.

The bibliography is organized into three major sections: tracing the problems and promises of early professional development literature through studies of effective professional development, professional development and results for teacher practice and student outcomes, and Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning.

Compiled and edited by Learning Forward, the bibliography is available free for a limited time to Learning Forward members for individual educational use.

www.learningforward.org/publications/oxford-bibliographies

4 common misconceptions about feedback

“There are many popular misconceptions about the content of feedback in the literature. Most misconceptions about feedback result from a more traditional view of feedback as information transmitted to a learner by a knowledgeable other as a part of assessment or evaluation,” writes Joellen Killion in *The Feedback Process: Transforming Feedback for Professional Learning* (Learning Forward, 2015).

An excerpt from *The Feedback Process* appearing on Learning Forward's blog explores four common misconceptions about feedback:

- Feedback occurs only in performance evaluation.
- People are feedback averse.
- The feedback sandwich softens critical feedback.
- People prefer positive to negative feedback.

“Common though they may be, these misconceptions contain the seeds of an approach to feedback as a process rather than a product,” Killion writes. “Misaligned practices can, with some care, practice, and guided effort, be adapted or adjusted so they more closely align with practices recommended throughout this book.”

A free preview of Chapter 1 is also available for download.

www.learningforward.org/publications/blog/learning-forward-blog/2016/05/02/4-common-misconceptions-about-feedback-an-excerpt-from-the-feedback-process



Lay the foundation for great teaching and learning.

By Eric Celeste

Whether they are just building their skill set or need a refresher after decades in the professional learning field, learning leaders will want to fill their development tool kit with fundamental concepts and strategies that are essential to growing leadership capacity.

The sandwich strategy:

No matter how you slice it, analyzing student work together improves math instruction.

By Lynsey K. Gibbons,

Rebecca M. Lewis,

and Lisa Nguyen Batista

How can six students share eight sandwiches equally? A team of teachers at an urban elementary school demonstrates the power of collaborative analysis of student work as teachers and school leaders use students' responses to this question to guide instructional decisions and support professional learning about teaching mathematics. The group works with a coach to examine a formative assessment task, review Common Core standards, and discuss implications.

Expanding excellence:

Teachers cross district lines to learn with peers.

By Ben Owens and David Strahan

The Scaling the Pockets of Teaching Excellence project in Western North Carolina is a grassroots model of teacher-to-teacher collaboration and professional development. Recruiting interested teachers from neighboring districts, the project offers a way to identify, share, and leverage best practices across an entire region. Launched in 2014 with eight

middle and secondary teachers in four districts, the project has since expanded to include 26 teachers from a wide range of grade levels and curricular areas in seven districts.

Establish time for learning:

Finding time to collaborate takes creativity and commitment.

By Joellen Killion

Implementing new standards and other innovations related to improving student achievement requires time for teachers to plan, analyze, and revamp instruction. It demands opportunities for teachers to engage in professional learning, engage in feedback and coaching, and use the feedback to continuously refine their practices. Coupling effective professional learning that includes school- and classroom-based support with time for collaboration with peers and experts is one strategy available to districts and schools.

An open door to learning:

Inquiry process builds collaborative cultures within and between schools.

By Lisa Cranston

The deprivatization of classroom practice means that teachers are no longer working in isolation behind closed doors. However, changing the deeply rooted norm of privacy has been difficult because it requires risk-taking by teachers and leaders. With the support of central office curriculum consultants, educators at three schools in Southwestern Ontario used a collaborative inquiry process combined with classroom observations using a lab class model to investigate student inquiry-based learning while building a culture of openness and professional learning within and between schools.

Nimble navigation:

A constant cycle of assessment keeps learning on course.

By Wendy James and Terry Johanson

A professional learning facilitator needs to base planning and instruction on assessment. Adult learners need the learning experience to be as focused as possible on their questions and their teaching circumstances. Whether the professional learning is a half-day session or extends over multiple school years, leaders can plan the learning experience so it is designed to gather data about teachers' needs and respond to that data immediately. The authors outline tools to assist facilitators in collecting data about what teachers understand, value, or may need next.

What are we learning about how we learn?

By Bruce Joyce and Emily Calhoun

New — and very good — curriculums and technologies are ready for implementation, but states and school districts have few places to get help in designing the amounts and types of professional development that will enable them to fulfill the promise of those advances. For 35 years, the authors and their colleagues have tried to find out how people can learn to use new curriculums and ways of teaching. Here's what they've learned along the way.

Advice from learning professionals.

Learning Forward members from around the country offer words of wisdom to new learning leaders.



feature

The promise of partnerships:

Researchers join forces with educators to solve problems of practice.

By Gail R. Meister and Cynthia L. Blitz

There are several reasons for professional learning leaders to take a closer look at research-practice partnerships. Funders, policymakers, and a growing number of education professionals increasingly expect the use of evidence-based practices to improve student results. With limited budgets and time, practitioners often seek to identify high-impact activities. Research-practice partnerships are a potentially cost-effective vehicle to increase student achievement.

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Lessons from research:

Implementation fidelity affects the degree of change in teacher practice.

By Joellen Killion

High-fidelity implementation of both the content and process principles of professional learning is important in supporting teachers' implementation of new instructional practices.

From the director:

A new role and a new vision for the road ahead.

By Stephanie Hirsh

A learning leader wonders what to expect as she prepares for her new job in a technical assistance agency.

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A new role and a new vision for the road ahead

I recently met a woman who is leaving a school system after 14 years to work for a technical assistance agency. She had limited professional learning leadership experience beyond the district and wondered what to expect.

We talked about how she might prepare herself. A new learning leader's first priority must be to have a vision for the quality and impact of professional learning. While my colleague had seen Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011) listed on posters, she had never thought about what they meant for planning and implementing professional learning in her school system. Now she needed to think about them on a larger scale.

As we talked about the importance of professional learning quality, she explained that her interest in the position lay in the opportunity to impact teachers and their students. We reviewed what she knew about how to make a difference and how she would use that information to guide her work every day. We acknowledged that if she finds herself in too many situations where she is asked to deliver stand-alone workshops, the position might

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not be right for her.

Next we turned to the challenge of working with strangers. Working with a variety of clients is different from working within a school system with the same group of educators day after day. My new colleague will meet educators from across the country, each with a different story and each hoping but skeptical that she can meet his or her unique needs.

I suggested she start by sharing her story. She will never have expertise in every challenge she faces. She can only offer what has worked for her and thoughts on why it worked. She can present herself as a fellow practitioner, not as an expert. She can offer her lessons, hoping that others can find a way to use them. If she tries to establish herself as the only expert in the room, she will fail. I reminded her that great expertise lies within the individuals in the room. The biggest gift she has to

offer is to help them find it for themselves.

We talked about her responsibilities as a model learner. Her credibility will increase as she demonstrates that she has the knowledge to lead. One of the greatest services she will offer her new partners will be to keep them informed of new findings and resources that help them with their work. In addition, I recommended to her that she investigate people who have shaped our understanding of

adult learning and review important lessons on evaluation and impact of professional learning.

Finally, we talked about the potential isolation of her new position and how a community of learners can be vital to her success. One option I encouraged her to explore is whether her new employer might enroll her in the Learning Forward Academy, where a community of learners investigates problems of practice with intensive support.

I look forward to watching her grow in her new role and for many teachers and educators to be touched by her passion, expertise, and dedication for years to come.

REFERENCE

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

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