abstracts

Twitterpated:
I found my learning community.
You can, too.
By Eric Celeste

Perhaps the most important reason networks are important to professional learning is this: By their nature, they create a sense of collective responsibility and mutual accountability for shared improvement. Groups that come together in whatever fashion — in social networks, via online video conferencing, or around conference tables — share in solutions to problems of practice and therefore feel collectively responsible for the success of all their students.

Bridging silos:
Novices partner with veteran teachers on the path to board certification.
By Erin Gilrein and Jennifer Wolfe

To stem the tide of new professionals leaving teaching, the Oceanside School District in New York created a program that sees teaching as a six-year career ladder beginning with an internship and ending with National Board Certification, with board-certified teachers supporting new interns and residents. The mentoring program provides leadership opportunities for seasoned teachers as well. Board-certified teachers and their accomplished colleagues enhance resident teacher practice through video reflection and peer support.

Open doors, open minds:
Empowered teachers work and learn shoulder to shoulder.
By Marcia Hudson, Lauren Childs, and Cynthia L. Carver

The Avondale School District in Auburn Hills, Michigan, created a job-embedded form of professional learning called Teacher Lab. Using a full-day released time format, Teacher Lab combines preobservation dialogue and study with classroom observation and follow-up debriefing. Participating teachers consistently report high levels of satisfaction with lab learning, and an internal evaluation linked Teacher Lab participation with improved student achievement. At the center of this success are teachers who see themselves as responsible for their own learning.

The virtual workroom:
Using social media, teachers reach beyond school walls to learn and grow.
By Jeffrey P. Carpenter, Torrey Trust, and Daniel G. Krutka

Unlike many traditional professional development options, educators can create professional learning networks tailored to their needs and interests. The authors surveyed 732 pre-K-12 teachers to better understand their perceptions of these networks as well as the impact on their teaching and student learning. Participants described unique combinations of people, resources, and digital tools, and appeared to be drawn to these networks for a variety of reasons. Several key factors shape success for teachers and administrators.

Cloud coaching:
Web-based learning holds promise, especially for districts with limited resources.
By Lindsay Clare Matsumura, Donna DiPrima Bickel, Dena Zook-Howell, Richard Correnti, and Marguerite Walsh

Designing a web-based literacy coaching program offers insights into the benefits and challenges of online professional learning. Web-based coaching shows significant promise for linking teachers to highly expert practitioners. This is especially important in districts that cannot afford to hire full-time school-based coaches or to train and support coaches to be experts in all content areas. Web-based coaching also offers special affordances that may not be available in face-to-face coaching.

Algebra? There's an app for that:
Florida goes online with math support for teachers and students.
By Joy Bronston Schackow and Stephanie Cugini

An online learning system for algebra teachers and students in Florida, called Algebra Nation, includes standards-aligned instructional videos that model Common Core practices, workbooks to accompany the videos, practice assessments that mirror the state's algebra test, and interactive homework assistance. A teachers-only area provides free, ongoing professional learning with activities that allow teachers to examine, analyze, and reflect on their teaching. Schools that were frequent users in 2014-15 report significant impact on student achievement in algebra 1.

What student writing can teach us about teaching.
By Nikki Holland, Ginney P. Wright, and Christian Z. Goering

Teachers in a small rural district in Arkansas meet once a month with Northwest Arkansas Writing Project staff to examine student work together and plan next instructional steps, providing a focus to the day's work based on the success and areas of further development identified by teachers in constructive conversations. The program aims to improve the teaching of academic writing with a focus on argument and, in doing so, increase student achievement. Three specific practices — constructivist coding, calibrating with anchor papers, and affinity mapping — would transfer easily to any professional learning community.

features

5 core roles of central office learning leaders.
By Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison

The changing field of professional learning over the past 20 years has also led to changes in the role of central office director of professional learning. The authors outline the responsibilities and challenges of five core roles that fall within the portfolio of district learning leaders: learning system designer, program manager, coaching champion, facilitator, and change agent. The shifting roles and responsibilities reflect a move toward a school- and team-based, collaborative, personalized, just-in-time approach to professional learning aligned with educator performance and student outcome standards.

Grassroots movement:
With teachers taking the lead, a diverse district tackles literacy.
By Julie A. Brua and Matthew K. Moreland

Learning leaders in the Aptakisic-Tripp School District No. 102 in Buffalo Grove, Illinois, faced a dilemma: How could they create a professional learning environment with a grassroots feel that empowers teachers to embrace new literacy standards while at the same time learning instructional strategies that lead to improved literacy achievement within a district where more than 58% of families speak a native language other than English? Working with their classmates and coaches in the Learning Forward Academy, they developed and implemented an action plan to meet their goals.

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columns

Lessons from research:
When teachers learn to use technology, students benefit.
By Joellen Killion

University faculty led a three-year initiative to integrate technology into instruction in two rural, high-poverty middle schools in the Southeast, which led to significant increases in end-of-grade assessment scores, particularly for African-American students in math and science.

From the director:
Turn your networking into powerful professional learning.
By Stephanie Hirsh

While we all have many ways to connect to others, there is a hierarchy of connections that can turn networking into powerful professional learning.

Write for JSD

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