

## theme/THE HIGH SCHOOL

**The professional, personified:** *Districts find results by combining a vision of professionalism with the use of common tasks and goals.*

Substantial improvement of teaching and learning at the high school level requires focusing on two core ideas: teacher professionalism and the use of common goals, tasks, and tools. Districts in Rhode Island and Oregon are using common tasks and developing the professional collegiality necessary for instructional consistency.

*By Judy Wurtzel*

**Higher expectations challenge teachers and students to succeed.**

Raising expectations for student performance was just one piece of transforming a high school in Atlanta, Ga. The school adopted the High Schools That Work (HSTW) model for school improvement and is now recognized as a thriving institution. Staff development includes annual retreats to examine data and determine faculty needs and ongoing professional learning throughout the year.

*By Priscilla Pardini*

**Best practices:** *Campaign to discover successful practices nets gains for high school.*

With the support of district administrators and an external facilitator, the staff in this Pennsylvania district created a long-term vision of a best-practices high school. After collaborating in the first year to refine their classroom practices, the leadership team grew to include a larger percentage of the school faculty. As a result, all staff members transformed their collaborative and instructional practices.

*By Kay Psencik, Hilary J. Czaplicki, Tracy A. Houston, and Debra Kopp*

**Growing together:** *New and veteran teachers support each other through practices that target the needs of high school educators.*

The New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz, has designed induction programs that target secondary teachers' specific content needs and that place teachers with mentors who teach the same subjects and in small learning communities. The program also provides time for novice and experienced teachers to share formative assessments to strengthen all teachers' skills.

*By Laura Gschwend and Ellen Moir*

**In the spotlight:** *Professional education program showcases everyone's practice in a sharing environment.*

A high school near Pittsburgh, Pa., created a professional education program to enhance teacher knowledge in technology, content, instructional techniques, and professional practices. Elements of the program included protected learning time during the school day, teacher-led small groups, educator-created goals, and opportunities for peer collaboration and feedback.

*By Jane B. Mather*

**The other three R's:** *Small Schools Project examines instructional change through relationships, relevance, and rigor.*

The Small Schools Project worked with several large, comprehensive high schools that converted to small, focused schools. The project discovered that those schools showing the most promise for transformative learning experiences for teachers shared a commitment to relationship-driven, rigorous, and relevant learning supported by distributed leadership, a clear instructional framework, and a strong professional community.

*By Mary Beth Lambert, Catherine A. Wallach, and Brinton S. Ramsey*

**The image of a wheel just clicked with me.**

An experienced high school English teacher had participated in a number of reforms in her school. When her small school director explained a model that aligned the school's efforts with student achievement as the core focus, the school created encouraging results.

*By Tracy Yarchi*

**It worked when I started small, expanded gradually.**

Schools and districts often stall when they undertake massive change initiatives. A retired principal helped a school change its math program through a series of small, deliberate steps.

*By Jim Slosson*

## features

**Standards and accountability movement needs to push, not punish.**

A true system of accountability in education must take into account more than students' standardized test scores. Several urban districts have implemented a variety of strategies to both improve and measure student learning, strategies that emphasize using standards and assessments as the basis for professional development and curricular reform rather than as punishments for schools and students.

*By Linda Darling-Hammond*

**Not just a manager anymore:** *Principal's role as literacy leader moves to the front.*

In addition to their other responsibilities, principals have the obligation to function as lead learners in schools. Several principals in elementary schools improved literacy achievement through learning by example and creating conditions for collaborative professional learning. These principals also emphasized the use of data to make decisions and maintained a strict focus on teaching and learning.

*By Annemarie B. Jay and Jack McGovern*

**Coming in Winter 2008 JSD: English language learners**