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theme/ THE HIGH SCHOOL

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HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

JSD is published four times a year to promote improvement in the quality of professional learning as a means to improve student learning in K-12 schools. Contributions from both members and nonmembers of NSDC are welcome.

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editor's note/ TRACY CROW

STORIES OUT OF SCHOOL AND WHAT THEY TELL US

My sister-in-law has been teaching in a small school system for almost 30 years. As the system's entire music department, she works with all levels of students. She's passionate about what she does. I'll often hear stories about parents, students, coworkers, or the upcoming musical.

While working on this issue of *JSD*, I've realized something about her stories — when she talks about the content or the students she teaches, she's telling a story about the high school. When she talks about her colleagues and what's going on at the building level, she's talking about elementary school. I've shared meals with a half-dozen of her elementary school colleagues, but I've never heard the names of any of her high school peers. Yet she spends most of her time at the high school.

In this realization, I recognize a lot of the challenges for effective professional learning in high schools. The culture in high schools doesn't typically encourage collaboration. High school teachers don't generally turn to coworkers for professional support — they work in isolation. Only the most innovative programs have teachers in different content areas planning instruction together. The more advanced levels of content taught in high schools lead educators to assume they don't have anything to offer one another professionally. Additionally, the perceived differences in abilities in students become sharper as teachers prepare students for life beyond high school.

I know my sister-in-law's situation isn't unique. I talk to instructional coaches in high schools who have encountered much more difficulty building trust than coaches at other levels. An advanced math teacher, weighing whether to attend an NSDC conference, asked me, "How many of the sessions are just about math?"

The roadblocks to effective professional learning in high schools, however, are not insurmountable.

In this issue of *JSD*, read about high schools and districts that have produced exciting results for teachers and students alike. In spite of the different cultures in high schools and the challenges those educators face, the professional learning strategies that work in high schools aren't so different from what works in all schools:

- Time and structures for collaboration along with tools for establishing learning communities;
- Skilled leadership and opportunities to lead;
- A culture that establishes high expectations for all students and all teachers;
- Effective coaching and mentoring programs; and
- Relevant avenues to expand their content knowledge.

As the new editor of *JSD*, I want to hear from you about what you want from this publication. Please read on p. 6 about NSDC's newly articulated purpose: Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves. How can *JSD* support you in that purpose? I welcome your feedback anytime.

Tracy Crow is the editor of *JSD* and www.nsdc.org. You can contact her at 2441 N. 4th St., Columbus, OH 43202, 614-263-0143 (phone and fax), e-mail: tracy.crow@nsdc.org.

digest

NSDC introduces a bold new purpose

For the first time, the National Staff Development Council has adopted a bold new purpose that connects professional development and student learning. The purpose also emphasizes that all educators have a responsibility to learn in order to improve student performance.

NSDC's new purpose statement says the organization exists to ensure that "every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves."

"At NSDC, we believe that when educators engage in effective professional learning every day, then students will achieve," said NSDC President Sue McAdamis of Rockwood, Mo. "That belief requires that educators have a clear vision of what such learning will look like in their schools. Once they have that vision, they will be able to become skillful advocates to achieve what they envision. Individual educators can make a profound difference when they believe that all students and teachers can learn and perform at high levels, when they possess a deep understanding of effective professional development practice, and when they

> **NSDC's purpose: Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.**

consistently and persistently act on these beliefs and understandings.

"We want to make sure that everyone understands that learning is for everyone. If educators can really engage in learning every day, then we firmly believe that student learning will improve," McAdamis said.

NSDC's Board of Trustees wrote the new definition for the purpose of the organization as it crafted a new five-year strategic plan to guide the Council's work.

The board shifted from a "goal" to a "purpose" to send a message that NSDC's reason for existence is ensuring effective professional learning, McAdamis said.

"Goals are important because most individuals and organizations believe they are essential for improvement in schools. A purpose, however, is the essence of what we believe and what we are deeply committed to. Our purpose establishes the reason we exist as an organization and focuses on the essence of our work," McAdamis said.

Unlike many other professional associations that exist to promote benefits for the adults who are their members, NSDC's focus is on the results of the work done by the adults who work in schools, even those who are not members. ■
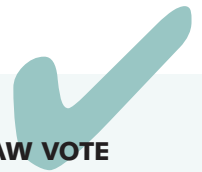
NSDC BYLAW VOTE AND BOARD VOTE

During the summer, NSDC members voted to approve a bylaw change for the Council.

The change ensures that NSDC is in compliance with Ohio laws that govern nonprofits; enables NSDC to use technology for all member communications; and clarifies the term of office and rules that govern the election of board members.

The bylaw change allows NSDC to have an online election in September to select two new members of the NSDC Board of Trustees.

Because of the bylaw change, board member and past president Bill Sommers will complete his term of office in December 2007 rather than December 2008.

The September issue of *Connect with NSDC* will include information about the candidates and directions for casting your ballot in this election.

Members who have questions about the balloting may contact NSDC, 800-727-7288 or e-mail NSDCoffice@nsdc.org.

For NSDC Book Club members

NSDC members who have added the NSDC Book Club (formerly the Plus Option) to their membership package will receive *Turning Around Failing Schools: Leadership Lessons From the Organizational Sciences,* by Joseph Murphy and Coby Meyers.

The number of failing schools has skyrocketed under stringent NCLB requirements. But there is no research base for turning around failing schools even though state takeovers have been practiced for at least a decade.

Murphy and Meyers have integrated the literature and research on the concept of turnarounds in businesses, nonprofits, and schools for an insightful and detailed look at what schools can learn from other organizations in trouble. By pulling out the leadership strategies and lessons learned, the authors illustrate how schools can use a new framework to craft successful reform initiatives.

Through a partnership with Corwin Press, NSDC members can add the NSDC Book Club to their membership at any time and receive four books a year for only $49 annually. To receive *Turning Around Failing Schools,* you must add the NSDC Book Club before Sept. 30. The book will be mailed to NSDC Book Club members in October.

For more information about this or any membership package, call NSDC, 800-727-7288 or e-mail NSDCoffice@nsdc.org.

on board / SUE McADAMIS

MAKE OUR PURPOSE YOUR PRACTICE

At NSDC, we believe that when educators engage in effective professional learning every day, students will achieve. That belief requires that educators have a clear vision of what such learning will look like in their schools. Once they have that vision, they will be able to become skillful advocates to achieve what they envision.

Individual educators can make a profound difference when they believe that all students and teachers can learn and perform at high levels, when they possess a deep understanding of effective professional development practice, and when they consistently and persistently act on these beliefs and understandings.

Kim and Amy are elementary reading specialists who serve students reading below grade level in my district. These teachers have a clear vision of student and adult learning, have advocated for it, and have made a profound difference in promoting high levels of learning for teachers and students at their school. Through their own professional development, Kim and Amy learned about and implemented strategies for reciprocal reading and started to see remarkable results. Then they taught the same strategies to classroom teachers, modeled these strategies with students in other teachers' classrooms, and coached teachers as they tried the new methods. As a result, the excitement for teaching reading spread throughout the school. This school has great optimism and hope that teaching literacy in a more effective way will improve student achievement in 2007-08.

Sue McAdamis is president of the National Staff Development Council.

We can learn from Kim and Amy's example if we recognize the underlying beliefs that contribute to effective professional development practice. They are:

- **Sustainable learning cultures require skillful leadership.** Leaders at all levels must build leadership capacity of school-based staff and provide opportunities for them to deepen content knowledge as well as assessment, curriculum, and instructional practices.
- **Schools' most complex problems are best solved by educators collaborating and learning together.** Some of the most important forms of professional learning occur in group settings within schools and districts.
- **Remarkable professional learning begins with ambitious goals for students.** Examining data can identify gaps in student performance and help us design professional learning for teachers that will promote new teaching strategies and new ways of thinking about the content they teach.
- **Professional learning decisions are strengthened by diversity.** The diversity of perspectives, experiences, and career levels contributes to the best decisions in schools.
- **Student learning increases when educators reflect on professional practice and student progress.** Assessing the impact of professional practice requires clarity of thought regarding outcomes, the adult learning processes that will be used, and the evidence required to guide decision making.

High-performing schools don't just happen. Educators working together with a focus on student learning make them happen. What are you doing to ensure that every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so that students achieve? ■

Lea Arnau becomes new columnist on standards

Beginning with this issue, Lea Arnau will be writing a column on implementing NSDC's Standards for Staff Development (p. 55).

Arnau recently retired as director of professional learning for Georgia's Gwinnett County Public Schools, the 15th largest district in the country. Her work at the district level in Gwinnett and as president of the Georgia Staff Development Council has gained national recognition as a model of best practice from NSDC and from the American Productivity Quality Center.

Arnau, a graduate of NSDC's Academy XIV, has been a coach for the Academy Class of 2009 and a coach for NSDC's Coaches Academy. She also facilitates the Big 21 Network for NSDC.

Arnau is a part-time assistant professor at the University of Georgia teaching courses in the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy. This year, she is also working on creating partnerships on professional learning between the university and school systems. She is also co-writing two books on coaching with Sally Zepeda from the University of Georgia.

Beverly Echols named D.C. conference chair

Beverly Echols has been named chair of the 40th NSDC Annual Conference to be held in suburban Washington, D.C., in December 2008.

Echols is executive director of the Division of Academic Services Office of Workforce and Professional Development for the District of Columbia Public Schools in Washington, D.C. In that position, she is responsible for guiding the professional learning for the entire District of Columbia Public Schools staff.

The 2008 conference will be held Dec. 6-10 at the new Gaylord National Resort Hotel and Convention Center in Prince George's County, Md. Registration will begin in July 2008.

NSDC calendar

September: Voting for NSDC Board of Trustees election.

Oct. 12: Early registration deadline for 2007 Annual Conference in Dallas, Texas.

Oct. 12: Deadline for submitting a proposal to present at NSDC's 2008 Summer Conference in Orlando, Fla.

Nov. 15: Deadline for manuscripts for Fall 2008 *JSD*. Theme: Using Evidence. **www.nsdc.org/jsd/themes.cfm**

Dec. 1-5: NSDC 39th Annual Conference, Dallas, Texas.

SUPPORT NSDC'S FOUNDATION

NSDC members have embraced the organization's new charitable foundation, Impacting the Future Now.

Since the foundation was introduced at the annual conference in December, members have donated $20,090. These funds have been added to funds collected by the former Lynne Chidley Foundation. The total balance of the two funds is now $42,134.

The foundation is dedicated to impacting the future by growing a new generation of leaders who act on their belief that continuous learning by educators is essential to improving the achievement of all students. Funds from the foundation will be used to provide scholarships to the NSDC Academy, to provide funding for principals to attend NSDC conferences, and to fund initiatives identified by the foundation's board of directors.

Please consider making a donation that will make a difference in the lives of teachers and, through them, the lives of all students they impact every day. All gifts are tax-deductible. More information is available at **www.nsdc.org/connect/foundation.cfm** or by e-mailing Sybil Yastrow at sybil@yastrow.com.

HIGHER

EXPECTATIONS
CHALLENGE TEACHERS
AND STUDENTS
TO SUCCEED

BY PRISCILLA PARDINI

Ten years ago, Atlanta's Henry W. Grady High School evoked dual, conflicting images.

"If you were a student in the communications magnet program, you got a pretty good high school education," recalled Gene Bottoms, executive director of High Schools That Work (HSTW). "But if you were one of the other students, you didn't get much."

After almost a decade as an HSTW site, Grady is recognized not only as Atlanta's most successful public high school, but also as a Title I Distinguished School, a Southern Regional Education Board Gold Award winner, and a Georgia School of Excellence. What's more, the school now offers a second magnet program through its Health Science Career Academy.

"They've made some nice improvements," said Bottoms. "They're on a nice journey."

PRISCILLA PARDINI is a freelance writer based in Shorewood, Wis.

Improvements at Grady High School

Considered an inner-city high school, Grady has made significant improvements through sustained professional learning.

- The attendance rate increased from 83% in 1996 to 93% in 2002, the last year for which data are available.

- The 9th-grade retention rate dropped from 35% in 1996 to 11% in 2006.

- Between 2000 and 2004, the percentage of 12th-grade students completing the HSTW-recommended curriculum in English, math, and science increased from 41% to 88%. And by 2004, all students were completing college-preparatory English and algebra courses.

- The percentage of Grady 11th-grade students passing the Georgia High School Graduation Test on their first attempt increased in all five subject areas between 1998 and 2005. The percent passing grew from 73% to 90% in social studies, from 62% to 74% in science, from 84% to 92% in math, from 85% to 92% in writing, and from 93% to 97% in English.

- The number of Grady students taking Advanced Placement exams increased from 48 in 1998 to 177 in 2006. The number of tests taken jumped from 77 to 274.

- Mean SAT scores for Grady students increased from a combined verbal and math score of 905 in 1998 to 1100 in 2005. The increase is particularly significant given that the number of students taking the test grew from 77 to 141.

- The high school graduation rate between 2001-02 and 2004-05 increased from 56% to 89%.

- A total of 194 of the 212 students who graduated from Grady in 2006 entered college. Three students entered the armed forces.

- The percentage of Grady students entering public colleges in Georgia in need of remediation decreased from 25% in 1998 to 18% in 2002, the last year for which data are available.

HSTW STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Grady is one of 1,200 high schools and 300 middle schools that have adopted the HSTW school improvement design. HSTW is based on two principles: that students "get smart through effort," and that they're more likely to make that effort "if we get the conditions for learning right," Bottoms said. Those conditions, he said, include a rigorous curriculum that makes sense to students and convincing students that their teachers believe they are capable of performing at high levels.

Staff development is key to getting staff members at HSTW sites to integrate high expectations into classroom practices and encourage students to apply academic content and skills to real-world problems, Bottoms said.

HSTW staff development, while often site-specific and based on a school's individual needs, also includes a number of common components. The initial step is usually a two-day retreat at which a school's administrators and teachers look critically at the extent to which their practices are aligned with HSTW practices. If necessary, they then decide together on action steps to ensure that the HSTW practices are put into place. HSTW also offers a summer conference to encourage schools to learn from each other and a series of smaller follow-up workshops that focus on shared problems among several HSTW schools.

A SCHOOL THAT WORKS

Grady's path to success, said Principal Vincent Murray, began with raising academic standards for all students and answering the question, "What can we do to make every student successful?" The expectation today, he said, is "that we will not lose a single one." Key to getting there: professional development opportunities that refocused the myriad and typically disparate attitudes and goals of a large high school faculty into a common vision of school improvement and gave teachers the knowledge and strategies they needed to improve teaching and learning.

Grady's faculty meetings and planning periods often are devoted to staff development. Murray arranges for substitute teachers to cover classes for teachers to attend HSTW workshops or national conferences, and he earmarked a $5,000 school improvement award from Fordham University for summer staff development. He's also used Title I funds to pay overtime to teachers for working on staff development projects.

The school's staff has a lot to be proud of. Test scores, attendance and graduation rates, and the number of students in AP classes and going on to college have all increased. In fact, a 2004 Southern Regional Education Board case study highlighting the school's improvement efforts describes Grady as "an inner-city school that works for all its constituents."

Grady's accomplishments are all the more significant given the well-

HENRY W. GRADY HIGH SCHOOL
ATLANTA, GA.

documented challenge of improving high schools in general, not to mention those plagued with the problems of large, inner-city schools that enroll substantial numbers of students at risk of doing poorly in school.

Bottoms said high school reform is particularly tough because of the "deep-seated belief in the psyche of high school teachers and leaders that a lot of their students cannot learn very much." As a result, he said, high schools have traditionally exhibited a "sorting mentality" that led to placing students into different levels of courses.

Beyond that, there's the fragmented, departmentalized structure of secondary schools. "There's no synergism, nothing that binds individual faculty members together," he said. "You have 90 people going in 90 different directions." Leadership at the secondary level is more often about "control and management and keeping order" than curriculum and instruction.

But at Grady, Bottoms said, Murray was able to unify the faculty around a single mission: setting high expectations for every student. As a result, Bottoms said, Grady wiped out the whole range of low-level courses. "Teachers changed their belief structure and began to act as if more kids could learn more than they previously had," he said. "And they found out they could."

FOCUSED STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Serious school reform at Grady began with the school's response to a 1997 HSTW curriculum and instruction review that spelled out the school's strengths and weaknesses.

High Schools That Work

This school improvement initiative aims to prepare students for careers and further education by improving curriculum and instruction in high schools and the middle grades.

For more information, visit **www.sreb.org/Programs/hstw/hstwindex.asp**

Henry W. Grady High School
Atlanta, Ga.

Grades: 9-12
Enrollment: 1,245
Staff: 77 teachers
Racial/ethnic mix:
White:	27%
Black:	66%
Hispanic:	3%
Asian/Pacific Islander:	2%
Native American:	0%
Other:	2%

Limited English proficient: 1.6%
Languages spoken: 8
Free/reduced lunch: 44%
Special education: 12%
Contact: Vincent Murray, principal
Henry W. Grady High School
929 Charles Allen Dr. NE
Atlanta, GA 30309
Phone: 404-802-3001
Fax: 404-892-9084
E-mail: vmurray@atlanta.k12.ga.us

"We laid out a series of challenges," recalled Bottoms. Among them: "If a small learning community built around a theme was good for some students, might not such an approach be good for all?"

With an HSTW staff member acting as a facilitator, about a third of the Grady faculty participated in an end-of-the-year, off-campus, two-day retreat aimed at "getting everyone on the same track regarding student achievement," Murray said.

From that first retreat came a decision to focus on 9th graders. "If they got off to a good start, we figured they'd be more likely to have a good finish in 12th grade," said Murray. The school created small homerooms, called advisories, for incoming freshmen. Each advisory was led by a certified staff member trained to assume responsibility for formally monitoring, guiding, and nurturing his or her advisees. Faculty also developed new 9th-grade classes in public speaking and research skills. All three programs are still in place, and the advisement program now reaches students at all grade levels.

Murray, who has been principal at

Grady for 16 years, considered the first faculty retreat so successful that he's held one every year since, often designed and run with help from HSTW staffers. Participants review student achievement data and then, based on what they've learned, determine future staff development needs. "It's been a great way of engaging our faculty in the process of continuous improvement," said Murray. "We come out of the retreat with a few things in mind to work on the following year."

Over time, the exercise has led to schoolwide staff development on standards-based, differentiated, and student-centered instruction; literacy training; higher-level thinking skills; diversity; motivating students; teaching in a block schedule, and the transition to 9th grade. Teachers learn in year-long focus groups about issues such as research-based, multicultural, and gender-specific instructional strategies; the inclusion of special education students in regular classes; and the use of data to differentiate teaching. The work, which occurs during planning periods, released time, and sometimes faculty meetings, culminates in presentations to the entire faculty. The work focuses, Murray said, both on strategies that reflect best practices and on "what is practical here at Grady."

For example, the school introduced block scheduling in 2001 in an effort to motivate more students to undertake and complete challenging assignments. That change required teachers to learn specific strategies — such as project-based instruction and cooperative learning — that are better-suited to longer class periods. A desire to give more students a way to focus their high school studies on something relevant to their future led to the development of the Health Science Career Magnet Program.

Grady developed an honors program for 9th- and 10th-graders as a

way to motivate more students to achieve at a high level. "The goal is to get them to experience what an honors class is like so they'll be more likely to take Advanced Placement classes in 11th grade," Murray said. Counselors encourage underclassmen with mediocre grades but strong test scores and writing skills to take the classes.

Murray said staff development helped those teaching the new honors courses learn practical ways to differentiate instruction and assessment to reach more students. But they also learned, he said, "Kids will rise to the occasion for teachers with a 'you can do it' kind of attitude.

"It's part of our culture," he added.

Marian Kelly, who chairs Grady's language arts department and the school leadership team, points to the proliferation of honors courses as an example of how that culture — one that values collaboration, an interdisciplinary curriculum, and innovation — led to higher achievement for all students.

"Because the culture at Grady is directed toward trying to provide a successful experience for all children, we find people step up to the plate," Kelly said. "We had many teachers willing to take on new AP and honors classes, and those who had experience with advanced classes supported them and advised them on what worked." Kelly said teachers collected data on which honors classes were most successful. "We have teachers who do this extremely well," she said. "And if someone needs to take a day and observe those teachers' classes, we make that opportunity available."

Kelly said most Grady teachers feel safe trying innovative practices and suggesting new programs. "They're told, 'Be creative, and if you can demonstrate that something works, share it with someone else,' " she said.

Murray believes that because so much of the work on school improvement is teacher-led, it's "owned by the faculty," and ultimately more likely to be put in place.

Joyce McCloud, executive director of high schools for the Atlanta Public Schools, credits Murray with finding innovative ways to give Grady teachers the time and support they need to pursue professional learning. "They do a really good job of leveraging all the resources the school has," McCloud said. ■

BEST *practices*

CAMPAIGN TO DISCOVER SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES NETS GAINS FOR HIGH SCHOOL

**BY KAY PSENCIK,
HILARY J. CZAPLICKI,
TRACY A. HOUSTON,
AND DEBRA KOPP**

Hanging in the entryway of Quakertown Community Senior High School in Quakertown, Pa., was the school vision: "Enter to Learn; Leave to Serve." The school vision statement contained the right words, but it didn't inspire anyone. In many classrooms, teachers lectured from the front of the room, students sat in rows taking notes, and little professional conversation occurred among teachers about instructional strategies. Students were vibrant and active in the hallways, yet bored and unresponsive in the classrooms.

Student performance was not acceptable to anyone — not to the faculty, not to the students, administrators, parents, or community members. Parents and community members appeared at board meetings to complain about high taxes, high teacher salaries, and low student performance on state standardized tests. However, pressure from outside the school and from central office staff had no impact on the school. The high school faculty would have to initiate changes in the high school.

The staff had allowed a culture of low expectations to determine their course of action. Teachers believed that they had little impact on or responsibility for student learning. They were not empowered to make real changes in curriculum or instruction, and they struggled with seeing the value of their work. They avoided risk taking and worked in isolation. They had no strategies or supports in place to encourage sharing with colleagues to analyze data, to establish a common vision, or to learn from each other. "We had no sustained plan of action to chart the pathway to a transformed high school," said Dave Tyson, social studies lead teacher.

THE DISTRICT'S DESIGN

In order to change this culture, the district's central administration designed and implemented an effort they called Best Practices in High School. With a federal grant and the support of the school board and superintendent, the central office administrative team created a high school leadership team to begin con-

versations about what constituted a standards-based, best practices high school. The school district enlisted the help of the National Staff Development Council for an on-site facilitator to assist with the efforts.

The district leadership team turned to the work of Dennis Sparks and NSDC's Standards for Staff Development (2001) to establish the core principles of professional learning. In his book *Designing Powerful Professional Development for Teachers and Principals,* Sparks (2002) states:

- Powerful professional development engages all teachers in sustained, intellectually rigorous study of what they teach and how they teach it;
- Expanding teachers' repertoire of instructional practices assists them in meeting the diverse learning requirements of their students; and

- Through working together in collaborative communities, all staff members learn new strategies, reflect on their practice, and share what they are learning.

THE JOURNEY

With a set of principles and supports in place, the leadership team of 20 teachers and administrators was committed to lead and ready to learn. The team began by defining their vision of best instructional practices in high school. They established study groups, read several texts together, and used the readings to determine their vision of a standards-based, best practices high school. (See chart of goals on pp. 16-17).

The leadership team began with the goal of increasing the effectiveness of their own classroom practices. Based on their vision, team members

conducted self-assessments and set goals for themselves. With the support of central administrators, who often acted as substitutes in classrooms, team members established a system for observing each other and providing support and feedback. The leadership team met regularly to share what they were learning with each other. They also participated in six full-day sessions annually with the external facilitator. The facilitator's role was to encourage team members to learn from each other, challenge current assumptions, observe and give feedback, model best practices, refocus and re-energize the team, and bring relevant resources to the team.

Gradually, leadership team members began to see their vision become a reality. They began to value their own professional learning and their plan of action. Through their learning journey, they were re-examining and reinventing their beliefs and practices as educators. They began to see themselves as visionary and powerful teachers and leadership team members.

QUAKERTOWN COMMUNITY SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
QUAKERTOWN, PA.

LEARNING BECOMES CONTAGIOUS

The shift in the school's culture spread when the leadership team began to design strategies for engaging the entire faculty in the same process they had experienced. At faculty meetings, the team facilitated discussions to ensure that all faculty members were included; teachers began learning about best practices

Long-term goals

for Quakertown Community Senior High School Where the school wants to be by 2011

CURRICULUM

- Curriculum is:
  - Meaningful and authentic.
  - Completely standards-based and reflective of Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions.
  - Aligned vertically and horizontally.
  - Rigorous and prepares students for post-secondary experiences.
  - Available to the public.
- AP classes reach capacity to run.
- District offers more dual enrollment opportunities for students to gain college credit.
- Designate recognition for students reaching high achievement.

INSTRUCTION

- Instruction engages students in meaningful, authentic work that is based on the standards, Enduring Understandings, and Essential Questions.
- All instruction is purposeful, research-based, and diverse.

- Teachers:
  - Continually and collaboratively revise instruction based on assessment data.
  - Engage in collegial observation as a means of improving instructional strategies.
  - Continually evaluate the effectiveness of the co-teaching model based on student achievement data and adjust instruction as necessary.
  - Implement current technology as appropriate as a tool to enhance instruction.
- Teachers and students routinely model the skills of lifelong learners.
- Vertical teaming is an ongoing part of instructional and assessment practices.

ASSESSMENT

- Assessment data is used continually to review and revise curriculum and classroom practice.
- Differentiated assessment strategies (using different ways for students to show mastery) are used to measure student mastery of standards.
- Grading systems are standards-based and reflective of true student learning.
- Students continue to approach 100% proficiency on

together. The leadership team also wanted to confront beliefs that were holding the faculty back. The team wanted to spread the belief that the staff can learn from each other, change their instructional practices, and increase student achievement. Together, the faculty conducted research to define instructional terms, such as relevance, rigor, inquiry-based learning, and standards-driven curriculum. Staff members reported

those faculty meetings were some of the best they had ever attended and thanked members of the leadership team for guiding the conversations. The leadership team's facilitation of learning at staff meetings became common practice, and team members grew more confident in their leadership.

In the second year of the grant, 12 additional faculty volunteers joined the leadership team, participat-

ing in full-day sessions, engaging in readings and classroom observations, and implementing classroom best practices. They, too, became reflective about their instruction and the impact on student learning. They joined the learning journey by engaging in deeper, meaningful conversations about teaching and learning with others.

In the third year, the leadership team, now consisting of 30% of the faculty, provided leadership for the entire school district to implement collaboration time. The team wanted to spread the practice of collegial dialogue that produces higher student achievement results, and they needed more time to work together. Team members needed time to model effective practices for each other.

The team researched models at successful high schools that provided common collaboration time during

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Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) based on current data.

REFLECTION

- Students independently use reflection to produce high-quality work.
- The professional learning community continuously challenges the status quo, seeks new methods, tests those methods, and reflects on the results.
- Students use reflection strategies as an integral part of being lifelong learners.

COLLABORATION

- Collaboration is self-sustained and teacher-driven.
- Students and community participate in collaboration meetings.
- Core groups are agile and dynamic.
- The professional learning community opens up collaboration as a resource for other schools.
- Teachers consistently use peer observation.

CULTURE

- Successful 9-12 mentoring program connects students with the entire community.

- Each student participates in at least one extracurricular activity in his/her high school career.
- The entire professional learning community stays abreast with and applies current educational trends and research.
- Student attendance, graduation, and student achievement increase significantly.
- Highest level of respect established between and among students based on mission.
- School and community continually recognize student and teacher achievement.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Schoolwide communications are continually created and delivered by students.
- Building facilities are flexible to continue/expand opportunities for large-group instruction or multiple uses.
- Buildings are bright learning environments.
- The classroom is a showcase of exemplary student work to accelerate the learning of all students.
- The classroom is an environment that is conducive to student collaboration and encourages meaningful learning.

the school day. Team members shared what they were learning with the school board and showed the impact of their work on student learning. When they requested time for full faculty collaboration, the board unanimously approved the request. At least once a month, school started late and all staff were members of collaborative learning communities. Sometimes, the staff used collaboration times to design model lessons. Sometimes, they shared best practices in their own classrooms and examined models of student work. Together, they developed curriculum and assessment strategies. The whole faculty was becoming a professional learning community.

Five years later, Quakertown Community Senior High School was decisively moving to fulfill its promise in its mission and vision as its students entered to learn. Throughout

the journey, the leadership team eventually facilitated the entire faculty to be intentional about their professional learning and courageous in implementing new strategies in their classrooms. Through this collaboration, a new strategy for improving student achievement across the school emerged: a whole-faculty focus on mathematics and writing.

Leadership team members who taught mathematics and language arts shared with the entire faculty what students had to know in mathematics and language arts to be successful on the state assessments. The mathematics teaching team solicited the help of the rest of the staff in teaching students mathematical concepts and skills across the curriculum. The team explained strategies for identifying and tutoring students who were struggling to master the curriculum. Seeing the eagerness of the entire staff to

help students learn mathematics, the language arts writing teachers made the same request. They engaged in conversation with the faculty to generate ideas and instructional strategies for using writing across the curriculum. They modeled how the state scored writing samples and shared anchor papers with the staff. Teachers began using student work as exemplars in their classroom. The learning community was energized and enthusiastic about their progress.

At the close of the grant, teams were collaborating to meet the needs of their students. Faculty members valued and were engaged in powerful professional learning. Isolation within and across departments began to change. Teachers discovered that not only were they responsible for student learning but that they also had the power to increase student achievement. Over the five years of the grant,

student achievement increased significantly (see table of state assessment scores at right).

THE CHALLENGES

The leadership team encountered challenges on its learning journey. Team members sometimes faced cynicism and skepticism from fellow faculty members. Sometimes, they confronted negativism gently; sometimes, they simply stayed on course and focused on their learning. In addition, the leadership team stumbled from time to time when the external facilitator was not with them.

Team members sometimes failed to follow through on their promises to each other, their visitations, and their newly learned instructional practices. They struggled to change old habits. Though they may have lagged behind in their readings and reflections, they never lost sight of their vision.

THE LESSONS

Through five years of work, the central administration, faculty, and facilitator have learned many things about themselves and about the power and challenges of changing a high school culture.

High school faculties are deeply engrained in a historical culture of working alone. Yet when high school staff members are goal-oriented and given the opportunity to work together, they are powerful leaders and models of thoughtful learners.

When administrators design systems that allow for teacher empowerment and professional learning, teachers shift the culture of the high school from low to high expectations for all.

When teams create and hold a common vision and commit to learning as part of their daily work together, team members bring energy to their teaching and are models for other teachers.

New organizational systems and structures that provide ample time for conversation are essential for a culture of collaboration, learning, and professional collegiality to emerge. The school schedule, organization of students, use of time and resources, and conversations with teachers about their needs all change dramatically when a high school leadership team focuses on embedding professional learning into its daily practice.

Change begins with leadership and takes years of focus, persistence, and celebration. The leadership team learned together that educators must respond to the complex needs of students and communities if public education is going to be a viable service to society. Deb Scheetz, an English teacher at Quakertown High School, explains: "The heart of the Best Practices initiative was the revitalization of our teaching strategies, but out came so much more — camaraderie and reconnection among us, the exchange of faith and trust between the administration and teachers, and the sense that we were doing all the right things for our students. It made me feel renewed."

Maintaining momentum requires ongoing support. At a critical time in their growth, the leadership team lost the external facilitator and key members of central administration. Without this support, the team is struggling to maintain meaningful change.

As Dennis Sparks says in his book, *Leading for Results* (2007), "Leaders matters. What leaders think, say, and do — and who they are when they come to work each day — profoundly affects organizational performance, the satisfaction they and those with whom they interact derive from their work, and their ability to sustain engagement with their work over the period of time necessary to oversee significant improvements." Leadership makes a difference in sustainability. Leadership throughout the organization is essential to keep community conversations and professional learning, the strategies that transform high schools, in the forefront.

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Student achievement gains

Percentage of 11th-grade students scoring at proficient and advanced levels on the state assessment

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Math	49%	48%	51%	52%	52%	64%
Reading	58%	58%	59%	64%	71%	75%

Writing

	Advanced	Proficient	Basic	Below basic
2003	5%	57%	20%	16%
2004	4%	63%	17%	15%
2005	11%	56%	18%	14%
2006	30%	61%	9%	0%

BY LAURA GSCHWEND AND ELLEN MOIR

Growing TOGETHER

New and veteran teachers support each other through practices that target the needs of high school educators

Induction, done well, has the potential to act as a professional incubating system that cultivates excellence among this country's secondary teachers. Rosenholtz (1985) wrote, "Effective teachers are 'made' rather than 'born'" (p. 380). When one considers that half of secondary teachers expect to leave their positions by 2010 (National Center for Education, 2005), the statement has even more significance. With massive secondary teacher turnover rates pending, successfully inducting new high school

teachers and administrators must become a central goal in secondary reform. The turnover provides an extraordinary opportunity to both renorm and reinvigorate our nation's secondary schools.

Secondary teachers have induction needs unique to high schools (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). How is secondary induction different from other types of induction? What induction program elements need to be in place to specifically address secondary teachers' needs? How might novice growth leverage veteran growth?

The New Teacher Center (NTC) at the University of California, Santa Cruz has applied specific strategies to provide teachers, induction specialists, professional developers, administrators, and educational leaders with an

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array of secondary induction best practices that help schools reach their student achievement goals.

Induction programs that are catalysts for secondary educational reform have common characteristics. They effectively target secondary teachers' content-specific needs, use mentoring in conjunction with communities of practice, provide content-alike mentoring, fill learning gaps with creative mentoring interventions, and use formative assessment with both new teachers and their veteran counterparts. Secondary schools across the country have added those five components to the foundation of a high-quality induction program (see box at right) to meet the distinct needs of new teachers.

TARGET CONTENT-SPECIFIC NEEDS

With content needs so varied among new secondary teachers, what kinds of professional development support most effectively gets at the technical core of secondary teaching?

High school teachers need to be proficient in their academic disciplines. They also face diverse students, including English language learners, who have varying academic needs. Teachers need to know how to effectively differentiate to reach all students, including how to target academic literacy. Three types of ongoing professional development address these needs: monthly seminars; weekly conversations with mentors; and the New Teacher Center Formative Assessment System.

Along with weekly coaching from highly trained mentors, new teachers in NTC programs typically participate in monthly seminars aligned with California's six induction standards. In accordance with those standards, first-year teachers focus on applying content and pedagogy strategies. They also focus on building healthy classroom environments and methods for teaching special popula-

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What marks a high-quality induction program?

The New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz has found that the most effective induction programs use a comprehensive system of support marked by:

- High-quality, carefully selected mentors;

- Expertly trained, fully released mentors;

- Authentic mentoring processes where teachers routinely reflect on their practices as measured against teaching standards;

- Rigorous and comprehensive use of an effective, research-based, formative assessment system;

- A standards-based seminar series for new teachers;

- Collaborative inquiry;

- District/site/professional partnerships;

- Supportive working conditions, including realistic workloads; and

- Administrative support.

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tion students. Second-year teachers focus on acquiring strategies to work with English language learners, using technology in content-area lessons, and supporting equity, diversity, and access to the core curriculum. Each year, new teachers submit portfolios documenting student learning in each of the six areas represented in California's induction standards. Through this sequenced and scaffolded series of professional development seminars, new teachers work with mentors to set professional development goals and meet credentialing standards.

During weekly coaching sessions,

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mentors work with new teachers in a variety of ways, including examining their practices, planning lessons, analyzing student work, and/or applying continuums of practice to foster reflection. Mentors, who typically work with as many as 15 new teachers for $1^{1}/_{2}$ to 2 hours each week, also might conduct routine classroom observations and use NTC mentoring tools to collect data. Mentors also commonly demonstrate lessons in new teachers' classrooms and then debrief with the teacher. Finally, mentors emotionally support new teachers.

The NTC Formative Assessment System provides mentoring tools and protocols for collecting evidence of student learning, including measuring growth over time, collecting classroom data, responding to teachers' developmental needs, using diverse assessments, fostering an internal locus of control among novice teachers, and mentoring around professional standards. NTC provides professional learning for mentors focused on mentoring for equity, differentiation, academic literacy, and working with English language learners. All mentors also take part in weekly forums designed to deepen mentors skills in content-area literacy.

LINK NOVICES TO MENTORS AND LEARNING COMMUNITIES

"While mentoring is the most widely practiced component of induction, mentoring by itself is not enough to retain and develop teachers," according to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2004, p. 11). Developing teachers' efficacy one new teacher at a time has merit, but the complexities of secondary teaching require more.

Mentoring strategies that raise staffs' collective efficacy levels result in the greatest gains for both novice and veteran teachers, as well as their students. Collective efficacy refers to teachers' beliefs that as a group they

can effectively organize and execute courses of action that will raise student achievement (Goddard, Logerfo, & Hoy, 2004). Goddard concluded that teachers' professional learning should emphasize skills and attitudes that build their collective efficacy.

One method for building collective efficacy in high schools is forging communities of practice that blur the lines between new and veteran teachers. In high schools, communities of practice are characterized by strong teaching cultures, collaborative practices, and a shared repertoire of resources and history (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). Some high schools have existing structures that foster collaboration between novice and veteran teachers. Where they do not exist, however, they can be built.

In one California high school, for example, an embedded NTC staff member facilitated the new teacher induction program while also leading year-round veteran teacher professional development for the school's four career-based small learning communities.

The NTC staff member pioneered a 20-day summer learning laboratory for 42 new and veteran teachers who worked in interdisciplinary teams of four to teach 323 students, one-third of whom were at-risk incoming 9th graders. Each morning, teachers spent two hours together learning about differentiating instruction. When students arrived, the teachers taught in teams. After classes, teachers analyzed student work, collaboratively designed lessons, and reflected on their practices, including spending time in critical conversations with trained mentors who were in their classrooms daily.

What effect did this professional learning intervention and summer learning laboratory have on students and teachers? Studies of student achievement and teacher learning showed student test scores at the target school were higher than those of

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What factors make high school induction distinctive?

Induction experts and existing research identify the following characteristics as being essential for high school teacher induction:

- Use mentors in the same subject area to help teachers develop deeper content knowledge.

- Inculcate ongoing literacy and numeracy strategies in novice teacher training. One out of every four secondary students has not yet mastered basic reading and math skills; secondary teachers must learn strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy across the curriculum for all students.

- Train mentors and new teachers to work effectively with English language learners.

- Ensure that teachers are given regular, structured time for induction activities, such as common time for planning and collaboration.

- Provide special assistance for teachers who have content knowledge, but nontraditional teaching preparation.

- Create a positive working environment and realistic workload; avoid assigning new teachers to the most difficult classes, making them commute to various classrooms throughout the day, requiring numerous teaching preps, and asking them to lead extracurricular activities.

Adapted from the Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004, pp. 20-21

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similar schools within the district (Strong, Achinstein, Fletcher, & Millhollen, 2005), incoming 9th graders enrolled in the summer institute had above-average scores on a norm-referenced test and scored above the proficient level on the California Standards Test, and novice teachers demonstrated evidence of reform-minded teaching, while experienced teachers also improved their practices.

Effective induction programs employ high-quality mentoring systems while also embedding communities of practice within secondary schools.

USE MENTORS WHO TEACH THE NOVICE'S SUBJECT

Teachers' subject-area expertise should affect decisions about who should mentor whom. In high schools, academic disciplines play a central role in maintaining teachers' identities and norms of practice (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001).

New teachers are more likely to

continue teaching in their schools of origin when they are mentored by experts in their own subject areas (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). And mentors' skills are maximized when they coach new teachers from similar content areas (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Optimally, secondary induction programs should use content-alike pairings between mentors and new teachers.

When a school lacks the resources to match new teachers with content-alike mentors, a teacher in a different content area certainly can coach a new teacher. For most programs in this country, that is the norm. However, inexpensive alternatives do exist. One method includes adding a second mentor as a content consultant to the primary mentor. For example, a new algebra teacher lacks access to a math mentor, so his induction mentor regularly consults with a content specialist to be able to assist the new teacher in meeting his content-based induction standards. In some

situations, the induction mentor and the content specialist regularly meet to analyze work from the new teacher's students, to observe in the new teacher's classroom, and to review curriculum. The induction mentor focuses on pedagogy and licensing, while the content expert focuses on connecting subject matter to pedagogy.

Adding a content expert to the mentoring mix can more fully support new secondary teachers in their development.

ADDRESS CONTEXT NEEDS AND TEACHER LEARNING GAPS

Beyond the typical mentoring practices used in induction around the country, the New Teacher Center has found that secondary schools need newly tailored approaches. For instance, to address new secondary teachers' specific context needs, the NTC has expanded its practice of one-on-one mentoring to include group mentoring. In some high schools, mentors work with groups of veteran and new teachers in department- or grade-level teams. By collaboratively analyzing student work, co-planning lessons, and discussing interventions with case study students, mentors provide emotional support and instructional expertise for both veteran and new teachers. Group mentoring, whether in content teams or interdisciplinary teams, helps close learning gaps because it increases teachers' ability to transfer new learning to content-area classroom contexts.

For example, the high school department chair's role typically is ill-defined and focused more on paperwork than teaching and learning. In addition, the chair's role as a route to improvement often is overlooked. Administrators come and go, especially in urban high schools, but department chairpersons usually remain. Department heads can act as change agents for instruction, revitalize and

Facts about the New Teacher Center

- Founded in 1998 by Ellen Moir, the New Teacher Center (NTC) at the University of California, Santa Cruz provides vital leadership across the country through advocacy for intensive teacher and administrator induction.

- NTC's mission is to improve student learning by supporting the development of an inspired, dedicated, and highly qualified teaching force.

- NTC's induction model was based on the work of the Silicon Valley and Santa Cruz New Teacher Projects that have supported more than 10,000 California novice teachers.

- Recent induction work in New York City has resulted in 339 trained mentors for nearly 6,000 new teachers. Partnering with urban, suburban, and rural districts in 34 states, NTC disseminates effective induction practices and technical assistance to K-12 schools, including charter and small high schools.

- Learn more at www.newteachercenter.org.

renorm teachers' instructional expertise, and foster healthy collegial relationships.

In one suburban high school in San Jose, Calif., in 2005, mentors were assigned to each of the school's academic department chairpersons. Mentors helped the chairs lead their departments through an intense professional development process redesigning a course in which student achievement levels had historically

been low. At the end of the year, each department had made progress in ensuring that the designated courses met content standards, that teachers had developed common assessments and archived them for future new teachers, and that teachers were able to use differentiated instructional strategies.

Mentors can work one-on-one or with groups of new and veteran teachers to offer increased options designed to maximize teacher learning. Mentors, in newly adapted roles, also can work with department chairpersons. Tailored approaches offer an array of possibilities for expanding mentoring roles in secondary settings.

HAVE NOVICE AND VETERAN TEACHERS SHARE FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Effective induction programs allow new teachers and their mentors time together to systematically set professional goals and monitor and reflect on professional growth. Novices and veterans work together to analyze student work; discuss growth using an NTC mentoring tool that allows each new teacher to identify what is working, what challenges the teacher faces, and next steps; develop their own learning plans; create common assessments; and observe in each others' classrooms. Veteran teachers who are not mentoring are less likely to experience these tools for professional learning. Developing a mentoring program around these protocols builds teachers' connections and strengthens the skills of both novice and veteran.

In one Santa Cruz County high school, for example, an NTC staff member worked with a department of 18 math teachers, five of whom were new teachers, focusing on increasing English language learners' success in Algebra I. In 10 after-school sessions over five months in 2003-04, teachers reviewed research studies describing

the strengths and challenges of students learning English as a second language and developing reading skills. The teachers considered essential ideas from these studies in light of the specific language and reading skills students needed to be able to apply Algebra I concepts. Each teacher conducted a case study, applying ELL strategies and monitoring the strategies' effect on a group of English language learners during a unit. An experienced site facilitator/mentor supported the teachers. The teachers then presented the results of their projects to two small groups that included other workshop participants and site and district administrators (Bongolan, 2006).

Algebra teachers involved in this project continually monitored data on students' language development and individual achievement and found achievement in the subject area improved markedly, especially in solving word problems and understanding the text. Participating teachers reported increased motivation for collaborative inquiry and skill in addressing ELL needs (Bongolan, 2006).

When adult learners on secondary campuses engage in rigorous, consistent, and powerful conversations about formative assessment, teachers gain effectiveness and students improve achievement. New and veteran teachers grow best when they grow together.

CONCLUSION

High school teachers navigate an especially complex cultural terrain (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001).

As a result, induction programs must address their unique issues.

Consensus is emerging as to what constitutes high-quality induction for all teachers. However, fewer than 1% of current new K-12 teachers in the United States experience this kind of comprehensive induction package (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Much

work needs to be done before every teacher has access to a comprehensive induction program.

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In the SPOTLIGHT

**PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION
PROGRAM SHOWCASES
EVERYONE'S PRACTICE
IN A SHARING ENVIRONMENT**

BY JANE B. MATHER

It's 9:40 a.m. and walking into Room 102 at Fox Chapel Area High School in Pittsburgh, Pa., is like stepping onto a professional learning carousel. The room is a swirl of activities, discussions, and projects. One teacher sits in the back, poring over student exit slips from that morning's Algebra II class to see if students understand the concept of solving linear equations. At a nearby table, two teachers are learning to transfer video shot that day from the digital camcorder to their computer to use for peers to see their teaching techniques for discussion. Another group is meeting in the back of the room with a department chairperson, talking about their progress and sharing results from their individual action research projects.

The school's Professional Education Program, which ended its sixth year in 2006-07, involves
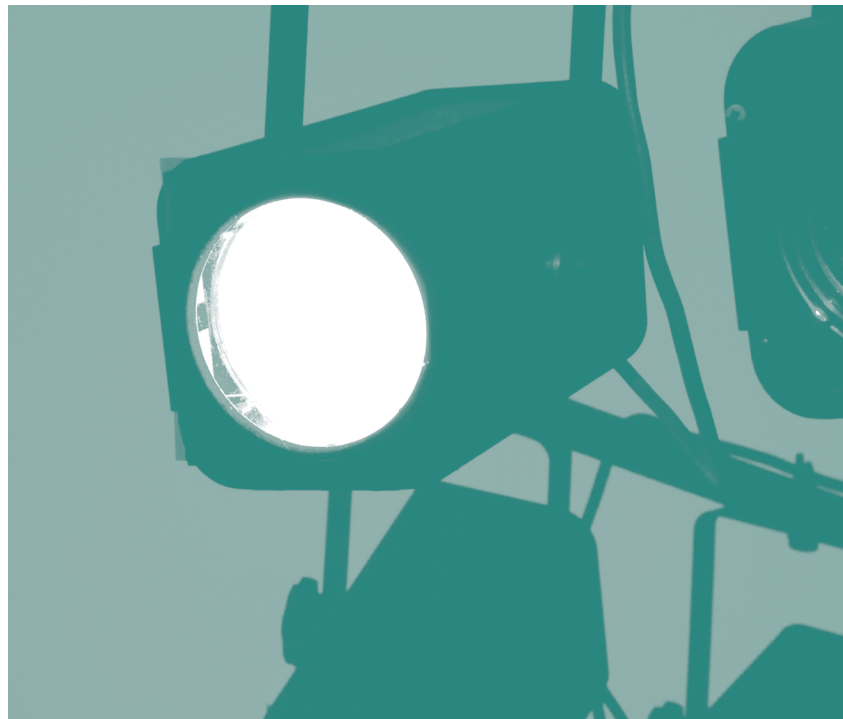
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scrupulous research, planning, and shared goals. Diverse and small groups of staff meet during protected time within the school day to work on teacher-selected goals. Teachers then demonstrate their professional

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learning with a portfolio and presentation to faculty and administrators at the end of the semester.

THE BEGINNING

A planned renovation of Fox Chapel Area High School in 2000-01 called for an infusion of technology, including creating a wireless network for computing, adding computer labs, and providing

**FOX CHAPEL AREA
HIGH SCHOOL**
PITTSBURGH, PA.

laptops to teachers. During this development, school board members wanted to know how teachers would use the new technology, and the principal responded by proposing a semester-long class for teachers that would combine learning about technology with deepening content knowledge and pedagogical practices.

With a grant, the school funded a teacher's salary to spend one year designing new professional learning for teachers structured around the increased technology. The author, an English teacher, was selected to design the learning and began by interviewing most of the teachers at the high school to find out their needs. Administrators, teachers, community members, and invited faculty from area colleges and universities brainstormed how to create a program to benefit the high school.

The resulting plan provided teachers with the opportunity to spend dedicated time during the school day to enhance their knowledge and skills in technology, content, instructional techniques, and professional practices. About 20 teachers per semester had an extra 80 minutes of released time for teacher-led, small group professional learning. The intent was to provide each professional staff member with this opportunity about every three years.

Although the suburban high school had high student achievement before the Professional Education Program, teachers weren't always learning and growing in their own professional practices. Instead, they worked individually behind closed classroom doors. As educators, they weren't asking what wasn't going well and what could improve. The district planned daylong professional development programs, but too often teachers attended a program that spotlighted a best practice and then went back to teaching the way they had been with no follow-up. With the Professional Education

Fox Chapel Area High School
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Grades: 9-12
Enrollment: 1,627
Staff: 136
Racial/ethnic mix:
White:	93.2%
Black:	0.2%
Hispanic:	1%
Asian/Pacific Islander:	5.4%
Native American:	0.1%
Other:	0.1%

Limited English proficiency: 0.2%
Languages spoken: Chinese, Spanish
Free/reduced lunch: 8.7%
Special education: 13%
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Program, they no longer could remain unaffected by their professional learning. Their work, their ethics, their teaching practices, and their professional persona were made public in a sharing environment, whether or not they were seeking such an experience.

HOW IT WORKS

Fox Chapel Area had an advantage when it began to create this learning opportunity. The school had restructured its school day in 1995 to mimic a collegiate schedule in which students select four, 80-minute classes during each semester. During a semester with the Professional Education Program, teachers teach two content classes, have their regular planning period, and use one block for the Professional Education Program rather than teaching a third class of students. The second semester would require those same teachers to teach three content classes and have a planning period.

Through a grant, the school supported two facilitators to work with three Professional Education Program groups each semester. These two teacher leaders did not receive an additional stipend, but their focus

shifted from working with students to working with adult learners during the professional education class times. For example, the author facilitates two professional education classes, has a planning period, and teaches one English class.

The facilitators work with school administrators to overcome one of the biggest hurdles for the program — scheduling. Before teachers' schedules are set, the facilitators help identify teachers who might be available for the Professional Education Program based on students' course requests. If enough students sign up to fill two sections of advanced chemistry, for example, a science teacher might not be able to be part of the program that term.

Participants volunteer, but support from school and district leaders has been key. Encouraged by administrators, department chairs have worked to have their faculty represented in the learning groups. Facilitators try to structure each group of six or seven to balance gender and experience and to provide a mix of content areas to develop a richness in the collaboration and discussions. The school nurse participated at one time, for example, with an action research project studying obesity rates in the district and identifying the fat content in foods available to students during the school day.

Participants then work with the facilitator to gather resources in the first few weeks and to write individual learning goals based on specific class needs and school or district goals around one of the key strands: technology, content, instructional techniques, and professional practices. The groups meet daily to work on their action research project, talk with colleagues about any hurdles, and collaborate.

They videotape a short lesson early in the term, identify questions they want to target, and get feedback

on that lesson. The culmination of the project is a portfolio presentation with a final videotaped lesson to demonstrate what the participant accomplished in his or her action research. All faculty and school and district administrators are invited to these presentations. The frequent presence of department chairs, the principal, and often the superintendent added value to the experience for many. The school's former principal, in fact, covered classes occasionally for teachers to attend a presentation.

Initially, teachers were skeptical about the Professional Education Program. The teachers union received complaints that teachers feared adding to their workload. The first year, even the risk takers who volunteered for the work were cautious. They felt they were experts in their subjects and weren't sure how a math teacher, for example, would help them learn to better teach English. However, by observing each other's videotapes and opening themselves up to collegial feedback and scrutiny, they found themselves enmeshed in cross-content sensibilities. After participating, they saw changes in student learning and recognized the value of the learning time in improving their practice.

IMPACT

A University of Pittsburgh study (Iriti & Bickel, 2002) of the change found that two years after implementation, every participant felt the Professional Education Program experience was worthwhile and recognized the value of protected daily time for research, planning, and reflection. Teacher growth in areas related to teaming, problem solving with colleagues, and providing leadership to colleagues improved dramatically.

The most dramatic change occurred in teachers' knowledge and skill involving modes of instruction. For example:

• **Daniel Klipa,** a second-year math teacher, learned to use software to manage his class calendar, post notes and assignments, and give parents access to their son or daughter's progress. He also had his 9th-grade Algebra I students use the Internet to practice for their Pennsylvania System of School Assessment exam, which students reported gave them more confidence on the exam. Using the technology enabled the teacher to break students into groups and differentiate instruction. "The technology is a tool that allows him to go in that

direction," said Norton Gusky, district coordinator of educational technology. "He couldn't do that before. It was too time-consuming."

• **Heather Skillen,** a 10th-year science teacher, differentiated her instruction. She divided students into six different departments to mimic a crime scenario. She met with high achievers during homeroom to help them take on leadership responsibilities for their groups. Students wrote essays and maintained journals to strengthen literacy skills. One student wrote in her journal, "I learned more about forensic science techniques through my group because I learned how we all have to cooperate, and that's what the real scientists go through." Another wrote, "As a leader, I felt compelled to learn the material so I could present it to the group and the class. I learned a lot during this experiment that I didn't know before." A third reflected, "The fact that this was a hands-on experience made the job quite enjoyable. … I think the group leaders and members learned a lot from this lab without even realizing it."

• **Daniel Kirk,** 11th-grade Advanced Placement language and composition teacher, said the Professional Education Program is the "single greatest professional opportunity that I have been afforded in my 17 years of teaching in three different school systems." Kirk developed an action research project to help students improve their writing. Watching the initial videotape of his conference sessions with students, he realized he was doing most of the talking, and at times dominated the conversation with his own goals. Colleagues who observed the conferences also supplied anecdotal evidence. "I just needed to get out of my own way and help them to voice their own observations about their work," Kirk concluded. By clarifying students' goals for their writing before conferencing with them, he has

been better able to home in on what they need to improve. One student might want to improve on grammar, while another is focusing on transitions, for example. One student in Kirk's class wrote, "In each paper, I have made improvements. After the first essay, I shifted my writing style from literary discussion to literary analysis. Then I improved my conclusions and came to a greater idea on the third essay. On the fourth, I tried to put together all of the ideas from my conferences." Kirk is able to make meaningful connections with students now about what the language of writing rubrics means so students can take action to continue to improve.

• **Scott Hand,** a fifth-year video productions teacher, investigated how an electronic classroom impacts student study habits in a given course. Along with documenting student gains in lesson engagement and understanding, Hand has since collaborated with educators from around the world, most recently with a teacher in Australia who is implementing similar learning approaches to education in their schools.

Teachers' "effective use of action research to examine instructional practice and share information in a group has had a tremendous impact on individual classrooms as well as the professional culture of the building," said Principal Ken Williams. "The sheer nature of bringing educators together in a collaborative environment on a daily basis elevates cross-curricular connections that would otherwise not be possible."

LOOKING BACK AND AHEAD

Not all teachers have yet participated in the Professional Education Program, nor have all who have participated experienced gains equally, just as not all students work at the same rate. For the final presentation, some were reluctant to be videotaped or were not as enthused with the open

invitation for all staff and administrators to attend the celebration of their growth.

Yet the effect on school culture is noticeable schoolwide. Teachers across subject areas have gotten to know each other more intimately working together daily over a semester on similar issues. Collegial dialogue is more common, and more teachers are opening their classroom doors and seeking peer support. The music teacher has learned more about assessment and evaluation and has been asked by other districts to report on her methods. Business teachers have learned about improving writing and editing. A social studies teacher now works with all her students to improve their ability to take notes and has seen that skill translate into improved course grades. Students sometimes were asked to be part of their teacher's final presentation, and colleagues valued the opportunity and excused the students from class. Departments work with each other on shared goals, such as improving writing in social studies, opening up new avenues for collaboration.

By allowing teachers dedicated time for their own learning growth, Fox Chapel Area discovered that creating an ideal learning environment for teachers also helped create an improved learning environment for students. The Professional Education Program provides the structure, the curriculum, the resources, and the investment in high school teachers that allows them to empower themselves and their students through the best learning possible.

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The PROFESSIONAL, PERSONIFIED

DISTRICTS FIND RESULTS BY COMBINING A VISION OF PROFESSIONALISM WITH THE USE OF COMMON TASKS AND GOALS

BY JUDY WURTZEL

Current high school reform often focuses on small schools, small learning communities, and alternative paths to post-secondary education. While these reforms are necessary, recent evaluations of improving high-poverty high schools in urban districts (American Institutes for Research & SRI International, 2004 & 2005) suggest these changes are not sufficient.

What will it take to substantially improve high school teaching and learning at scale? In some cases, high school reforms have failed partly because they do not give enough attention to instruction, leaving overwhelmed teachers on their own to do the difficult work of developing curriculum, determining their own professional development needs, and creating other tools to improve instruction (David, Shields, Humphry, &

Young, 2001). In other cases, teachers have resisted top-down, prescriptive approaches to improving instruction because of their feeling that such approaches impinge on teachers' professionalism (Manzo, 2004). So how can states and districts provide effective guidance, direction, and accountability while also promoting teacher professionalism, use of evidence, and effective innovation?

Drawing on the expertise of teachers, principals, superintendents, policy makers, and researchers, the Aspen Institute Program on Education and Society report *Transforming High School Teaching and Learning: A Districtwide Design* (Wurtzel, 2006) suggests focusing on two core ideas:

- A new vision of teacher profes-

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sionalism that supports instructional improvement; and
- Mobilizing improvement efforts around common goals, common tasks, and common tools for high school instruction.

A NEW VISION OF PROFESSIONALISM

Transforming high school teaching and learning requires a new vision of teacher professionalism based on core commitments to improving individual and collective practice and student outcomes. Improving practice can only be done *by* teachers, not *to* teachers. But when teacher professionalism is defined as autonomy — freedom to make decisions about what, how, and sometimes even whom to

teach — that autonomy does not support instructional improvement. Robust teacher professionalism offers a new teacher job description that places accountability for results and the use and refinement of effective practices at the core of teaching. A new vision of teacher professionalism is defined by six tenets, described in the list on pp. 32-33.

Some argue that requiring teachers to adhere to standards of practice conflicts with the idea that, as professionals, they should exercise professional judgment. The question is, when should professional standards

and specific protocols be tightly prescribed, and when should teachers have the latitude to experiment? With specific practices, such as open-heart surgery in medicine or teaching phonemic awareness in education, professions must be demanding and specific to be accountable. In general, professional practice should be more tightly prescribed when:

- **Evidence is clear about what practices lead to good outcomes for clients.** In education, the research base is distressingly thin. Nonetheless, there is sufficient evidence on a wide range of instructional practices (e.g. elements of early reading instruction, the use of formative assessments) to make the notion of professional standards of practice reasonable.
- **The professional is less expert.** Those who are new to the profession should be granted less room for professional judgment than those who have been practicing and gained experience.
- **Consistency matters.** For exam-

ple, when students are highly mobile, consistency across schools is valuable.

- **Outcomes are poor.** Where student performance is weak and fundamental building blocks of learning are not in place, professionals should be expected to closely follow protocols to improve outcomes.
- **Client risk is high.** When the risk to clients is high — in cardiac surgery or reading instruction — the need to follow standard practices is greater than when the risk is low — treating athlete's

Tenets of teacher professionalism

Drawing from well-established norms in teaching and other fields, a new vision of teacher professionalism rests on at least six tenets:

1. A professional owes her primary duty to her clients — in the case of educators, to students.

2. Professionals are accountable to the profession for results. In teaching, this means the profession should identify and prepare its members in the knowledge, skills, and standards of practice most likely to lead to increased student learning. The profession also must hold its members accountable and discipline or eject from the profession those unable to improve student learning.

3. A professional has a duty to improve her own practice. Thus, professional development, coaching, classroom observation, and continued learning are essential parts of the job, not optional activities. Teachers should adhere to a core value of publicly owning student learning data and opening their own classroom practice to work with other teachers.

4. A professional has a duty to improve common or collective practice in the profession. In medicine, a death in the hospital triggers a morbidity/mortality conference in which the staff responsible for the

foot or teaching violin.

In this definition of professionalism, following agreed-upon standards of practice and specific protocols does not demean or limit teachers; rather, it is an essential element of being a professional. Autonomy is not a value or goal in itself but a resource for improvement.

MOBILIZING IMPROVEMENT

What steps does a district take to turn rhetoric about teacher professionalism into reality? The second core idea, mobilizing around clear goals and common tools, impacts the heart of instruction — the interaction of teachers, students, and content.

Secondary reform efforts are hobbled by the breadth of high school standards. Few teachers can rely on clear and explicit expectations for what constitutes effective instruction. Nor can they generally rely on a clear and reasonably concise set of content standards.

Some states and districts are using common goals and tools as the foundation for instructional improvement strategies that embody this new definition of teacher professionalism.

Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, and districts in other states are distilling encyclopedic lists of standards into a manageable number of core standards that define the essential elements in each discipline, a practice championed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM, 2006).

In Rhode Island, for example, the Department of Education and the state Skills Commission have engaged hundreds of middle and high school teachers from across the state to review the grade-span expectations and other discipline-specific standards and select the "big ideas" from the standards.

While well-defined standards and clear expectations for instruction are essential, what other instructional guidance and tools are needed to strengthen high school teaching and

learning? The Aspen workshop group concluded that states and districts should consider creating instructional programs for high school improvement in which common tools are a platform for improvement and innovation. Concrete, common tools — including core curriculum, common student tasks, staff protocols, and data systems — that translate goals to the operational level and increase effectiveness in daily classroom tasks are essential for improvement. These tools ground professional conversations and teacher work within and across schools, feeding teachers' efforts to improve their own practice, to improve collective practice across the district, and to elicit higher levels of performance from their students.

High-quality common tools are mostly lacking in high schools — except those that serve the most advantaged students. In those schools, Advanced Placement, with its required curriculum, aligned assessment, and professional development, provides a shared platform upon which AP teachers can work with their colleagues and outside providers to improve student mastery.

What might districts do to develop common tools to support instruction for all high school students? Given the power of assessment to drive changes in instruction, one place to start is with high-quality student tasks. Rhode Island has made common student tasks a centerpiece of a statewide high school reform strategy.

The Rhode Island teachers convened by the state and districts identified the big ideas in the standards and then created a pool of on-demand and extended student tasks based on those ideas that include teacher and student directions, clear connections to the standards underlying the tasks, the prompt, a rubric to guide student assessment, and an instructional guide. Teacher leaders who are part of this process develop a shared under-

standing of what the standards require, how students can demonstrate proficiency, and the instruction needed to ensure that all students have opportunities to learn, practice, and demonstrate their ability to meet the standard.

The real work takes place at the individual schools, where teachers meet, often with teacher leaders who participated in the statewide process, to review the outlined tasks, select those appropriate to their school, and integrate the tasks into their curriculum so that these tasks can anchor units of study, taking the place of disconnected assessments. As teachers select appropriate tasks, they discuss the curriculum, plan lessons, and share instructional strategies. After they teach the lessons, groups of teachers score student work, supported by teacher leaders who have been through a state calibration exercise.

In Rhode Island, these centrally created tasks are just part of the story. In many districts and secondary schools, teachers use common planning time to map backward from student expectations to create additional tasks and instructional units that are fast becoming part of a new high school curriculum. Teachers gather for calibration and scoring sessions centered on the student work that lead to deep discussions about "how good is good enough" and a more common understanding of what constitutes proficiency.

How are teachers reacting to the use of common tasks? Colleen Callahan, director of professional issues for the state American Federation of Teachers and a member of the state Board of Regents, says they are asking for task banks, sample lessons, and common rubrics.

"If you are going to assess us," Callahan said, "tell us what we will be held accountable for and give us the tools we need to meet your expectations."

The challenge now is not convincing teachers that the tasks are helpful, but providing the professional development needed for all teachers to be involved. (More information on Rhode Island's work, including sample tasks and rubrics, is available at **www.ridoe.net/highschoolreform/**.)

On the other side of the country, the Portland, Ore., school district also is using common student tasks to drive instructional improvement. District leadership last year asked middle and high school teachers to use a handful of common tasks, called "anchor assignments." (See examples of common tasks on p. 34.)

Every 6th- to 12th-grade student is asked each year to complete one anchor assignment in each of the four core content areas (English and language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science). Teachers in each content area give the anchor assignment at approximately the same time in the school year, then score sample papers from each class in teaching teams. Lead teachers, working with experts from the Washington, D.C.-based Education Trust, designed the assignments, linking them to key standards within each content area (such as character analysis in English and language arts or transfer of energy in science) and to standards that cut across the curriculum (such as data analysis or expository writing). Anchor assignments also require significant written work so that students have increased time and intensity of writing instruction across the curriculum.

Eleanor Dougherty, who led the development and implementation of the anchor tasks for the district, said some teachers object to using the assignments or argue that one task a year is insufficient. Most say more professional development is needed around the process. Yet the culture Dougherty describes as "go in your classroom, close the door, and do your own thing" is changing. For

patient and others in the hospital meet to determine whether professional protocols were followed, how to improve adherence to protocols, and whether the protocols should be reconsidered in light of new evidence. In teaching, the parallel is working with other teachers in an effort to learn from them, to help them learn, and to contribute to the collective knowledge about what works for students.

5. Professionals adhere to a body of specialized knowledge, agreed-upon standards of practice, and specific protocols for performance. In teaching, these standards of practice and protocols should be based either on evidence about effectiveness in improving student results or, in areas where the evidence is weak or unclear, agreement by the profession about the practices and protocols most likely to benefit students. In addition, the profession has a duty to organize teachers' work lives and responsibilities in ways that enable them to develop, refine, apply, and share knowledge of effective practices.

6. Professionals are expected to exercise professional judgment. While professional practice is governed by standards and protocols, professions require professionals to consider the specific characteristics and needs of their clients. In teaching, this means varying instruction to take into account individual students' background knowledge and strengths.

what is often the first time, teachers are sharing student work and developing a common definition of novice, apprentice, practitioner, and expert work.

They are asking why some teachers are eliciting higher-level work with similar students and comparing instructional approaches. They are thinking about what good classroom assignments look like, according to Dougherty, and asking themselves what they might do differently.

The high-quality common tasks used in Rhode Island and Portland provide a concrete, shared foundation for improving instruction. They focus professional discussions, provide for data analysis, and offer professional learning experiences for staff.

Shared tasks also help translate the knowledge base about effective practices into concrete work for students and teachers. Allowing teachers to develop, use, and analyze common tasks — and the teaching that leads to better performance on the tasks — builds shared understandings of good instruction.

Common tasks can galvanize teachers' commitment as they solve real problems and become the basis for continual innovation. Common tasks are not an end in themselves, but offer teachers opportunities to exercise appropriate professional judgment, to teach content that is meaningful to them, and to give their students some voice and ownership in what is taught and how.

Building the model and tools for improving instruction in high schools is a significant challenge, as is undertaking difficult conversations about the meaning of teacher professionalism.

However, if the next stages of high school reform fail to address the effectiveness and continued improvement of teaching and learning, other well-meaning reforms may ultimately prove unsuccessful.

Examples of common tasks
PORTLAND, ORE., ANCHOR ASSIGNMENTS

BIOLOGY ANCHOR ASSIGNMENT
Students might be given this assignment:

You have had some practical experience on the impact of varying the concentrations of a chemical on the heart rate of daphnia. Define the concept of heart rate using your evidence. Describe the relationship between the concentration of the chemical you used and the change in the daphnia heart rate. Use this knowledge to explain how the concentration of a chemical you ingest may affect your heart rate.

Teachers then grade student work as novice, apprentice, practitioner, or expert.

An expert response:

- Defines what heart rate is in clear, logical language, including a discussion of how it is measured in daphnia;
- Uses evidence from the experiment and knowledge of the chemical to describe the effects of different concentrations of the chemical on daphnia heart rate;
- Clearly explains how different concentrations result in different heart rates; and
- Uses conventions and grammar that exceed grade-level expectations.

ENGLISH AND LANGUAGE ARTS ANCHOR ASSIGNMENT
Students might be given this assignment:

From a work of literature that you have read, select a character who is faced with a conflict. Write a paper in which you define the conflict and analyze its effect upon the character.

An expert response:

- Engages the reader by establishing a context for the conflict and its effect upon the character;
- Communicates a sound understanding of the character's development (e.g. character's speech or actions, others' thoughts and reactions);
- Analyzes the character's conflict using varied references from the text;
- Strikes an effective balance between own ideas and references from the text;
- Effectively establishes and maintains a consistent focus on a thesis. Exhibits a logical structure with effectively placed evidence and interpretations to support the thesis. Makes effective use of transition words and phrases; and
- Includes few and only minor errors. Conventions support readability. Demonstrates strong control of conventions.

Learn more

Anchor assignments, scoring guides, annotated student work samples, and teacher resources are available on the web site of Portland Public Schools, Office of Teaching and Learning: **http://159.191.14.139/ pg/10609.**

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The OTHER *3 R's*

Small Schools Project examines instructional change through relationships, relevance, and rigor

BY MARY BETH LAMBERT, CATHERINE A. WALLACH, AND BRINTON S. RAMSEY

A teacher leader hands several sheets of paper to 14 teachers sitting in a circle. "Take a minute to look these over," he says, "and then we'll talk about what we can learn from what the kids say."

The room falls silent as the teachers look over the results of a student survey. Suddenly a teacher says, "I always struggle with this kind of survey. I can beat myself up over it." Other teachers offer support, saying, "That's easy to do, but it's not about us, it's about what our kids need."

"Yes," says one of the teacher leaders, "and what it tells us about maybe changing the way we teach. For example, what I see is that some of the students are asking for more rigor. I'm afraid that if I asked for more, I'd leave the bottom third of my class behind and condemn them to a failing grade.

"I back off. It scares me," he adds, not afraid to admit he doesn't have all the answers. "But then I ask myself, 'Am I shying away from rigorous work?' "

A FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING

The teachers in this small high school have worked together for three years. They share a commitment to adult learning as a necessary step to improved student learning. They have developed relationships with colleagues that enabled them to challenge each other through rigorous conversations and learning activities that were relevant to their individual and collective teaching situations.

The principles of relationships, relevance, and rigor (the three R's) provide a framework for structuring conversations and initiatives in instructional practice (Wagner, 2002). Typically, this framework is applied to student learning. In this article, we apply the three R's to adult learning and highlight three small schools in order to understand what makes the difference — what turns the corner — to instructional change.

At the Small Schools Project, we've spent six years working with more than 94 high schools, 68 of which were part of 18 sites converting from large comprehensive high schools to small, focused schools. The following is adapted from a report

that draws on data from a three-year study (fall 2003 to spring 2006) of seven small schools in Washington state. These schools received reinvention grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Through our work, we have come to understand that what is true for transformational student learning is also true for transformational adult learning:

- Instruction must take place within a community of learners, providing participants with opportunities to build on each other's knowledge, offer feedback, and refine thinking.
- Instruction must be personalized — honoring learners' interests and strengths, as well as eliciting and challenging learners' preexisting understanding of the subject matter.
- Instruction must include frequent formative assessment, which helps make learners' thinking visible to themselves and their peers (National Research Council, 1999; Wiggins & McTighe, 2006).

Effective adult learning requires a combination of individual and collective practice. We characterize individual adult learning by growth in a teacher's relationship with her students (adjusting her practice according to student needs and achievement), a personal interest in the learning topic, and personal commitment to attempting new teaching strategies and inviting feedback.

Collective adult learning is characterized by growth in teachers' relationships with each other as part of a strong professional community, a con-

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KEY QUALITIES OF THE 3 R'S IN ADULT LEARNING

Relationships

- Teachers know colleagues so well that learning opportunities can be tailored to the needs of each teacher.
- Teachers model integrity and open-mindedness for their colleagues.
- Teachers trust their colleagues so well that they grant them the moral authority to challenge them.
- Teachers are committed to their own success, as well as that of their peers.

Relevance

- Instruction is inherently meaningful and engages teachers in multiple domains.
- The learning community values and welcomes the diversity of each teacher into the life of the classroom and its community.
- Learning activities develop within each teacher the habits and curiosity associated with lifelong learning.
- Assessments are meaningful to teachers and offer them insights into their own learning.

Rigor

- Instruction is grounded in content that is complex, ambiguous, provocative, and emotionally or personally challenging.
- Teachers are engaged in active participation, exploration, and research.
- Teachers set learning goals for themselves and monitor progress toward academic excellence.
- Teachers develop resilience, flexibility, and confidence by facing academic challenges and temporary classroom setbacks that are opportunities for deeper learning (Karschney & Squires, 2005).

nection between the small school vision and the group's instructional goals, and a group commitment to collaborate on aspects of their practice that matter for improving student learning. The adult learning process becomes transformative when teachers' practices and beliefs are challenged or changed, and student achievement increases.

The momentum generated by the individual and group learning processes is strengthened by mutual accountability between and among teachers to open their practice. Teachers provide and receive feedback on instruction with the goal of transforming the practice and beliefs of both the individuals and the group.

Transformative learning, therefore, requires collaboration, risk taking, and individual as well as group commitment. These qualities both rely on and help to define relationships, relevance, and rigor within the adult learning community.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THREE SMALL SCHOOLS

We found that all seven schools in

the study exhibited elements of the three R's in terms of adult learning. However, three of the schools — which we call Alder, Cedar, and Chestnut — show the most promise toward creating learning opportunities that are transformative. Although it is too soon to tell from our data, we expect that this change in adult behavior will lead to changes in student engagement and learning.

Teachers in these three schools are moving from talking about instructional change to making it happen. In the schools where this movement occurred, three additional components were also in place. Relationship-driven, relevant, and rigorous adult learning are supported by distributed leadership, an instructional framework, and a strong professional community.

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

Over three years, a new leadership structure was emerging. This new structure moved away from a reliance on administrative hierarchies and moved toward a network of shared practice. As a result, everyone in the school became responsible for leadership. Within the small schools, teachers began to address school issues under the leadership of the most qualified staff member, regardless of his or her rank within the traditional high school hierarchy. At the same time, all three schools elected a teacher leader.

As the leaders closest to the change, teacher leaders epitomize this distribution of leadership. They play a number of important roles in supporting adult learning, including vision keeper, instructional

The project

The Small Schools Project, part of the Coalition of Essential Schools Northwest, provides technical assistance to new small high schools and conversion schools.

Resources include school and district coaching, professional development activities for educators and administrators, publications, and the web site, **www.smallschoolsproject.org.**

At the web site you can also find the study described in this article, entitled "Adult Learning: Turning the Corner to Instructional Change."

coach/facilitator, modeler, and prodder. In addition, teacher leaders act as advocates for their small school to the building leadership council. Making decisions through a leadership council shifts accountability for the choices made from the traditional hierarchical model to a more reciprocal model because both administrators and teachers participate.

In all three schools, teacher leaders discussed the importance of changing teachers' instructional practice and their role in supporting their small school colleagues with implementing these changes. For example, Cedar's teacher leaders periodically initiate and participate in ongoing e-mail conversations, including:

- How are you incorporating rigor and authenticity into your first-semester finals?
- How are you embedding rigor into your daily instruction?
- When we consider the Cedar vision, where specifically are we making progress?

Cedar's teachers made a group commitment to change their instructional practice and engage in learning

activities individually and collectively. They hold themselves and one another accountable by agreeing to implement new instructional strategies and opening their classrooms to one another for observation and feedback. The teacher leaders create and support this culture of risk taking by scheduling public demonstration lessons for each of the teachers to demonstrate new instructional strategies in their classrooms.

The principals of all three schools recognize the critical role that building leadership plays in supporting adult learning and instructional change, including evaluating each professional learning opportunity based on how it will help improve student achievement.

INSTRUCTIONAL FRAMEWORK

In all three schools, teachers talked about how their schoolwide instructional framework helped guide the staff's collective practice as well as their individual classroom practice. These frameworks emerged over the course of developing the small schools. Teachers worked together to create a collective mission and vision for their school and for classroom practice.

Alder's teachers said their instructional framework involved making their teaching practice more hands-on, project-oriented, and inquiry-based. Teachers use Essential Questions as one strategy to support this focus. Essential Questions, developed by the Coalition of Essential Schools, are multilayered questions that reveal the complexities of a subject or discipline.

At Cedar, the teachers chose the text *Teaching What Matters Most* as their school's instructional framework because the book's focus on thought, authenticity, rigor, and differentiation matched their needs and priorities. The book, by Richard W. Strong, Harvey F. Silver, and Matthew J.

Perini (ASCD, 2001), was given to all Gates grantee high schools in Washington.

At Chestnut, teachers engaged in joint work around "Habits of Mind" and "Habits of Work" that the staff developed and recorded on posters to hang in each classroom. "Habits of Mind" were first developed by Deborah Meier and her colleagues at Central Park East Secondary School 20 years ago. Many schools adopt the habits as they were written, while others add to or create their own, as Chestnut has done.

The goal at each school is to use a common approach and language to facilitate students and teachers making connections across the disciplines.

PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY

In his career working in schools, Roland Barth (2006) found that "the nature of relationships among the adults within a school has a greater influence on the character and quality of that school and on student accomplishment than anything else."

Teachers at Alder, Cedar, and Chestnut spoke about how their new professional communities were providing them, for the first time in their careers, the opportunity to move from isolated practice to collaborative work across disciplines. We found that a strong focus, a clear vision, and a shared language are the requisite first steps toward building collegiality. These elements helped establish a sense of trust among teachers in professional communities. When trust was established, teachers were more likely to collaborate, seek advice on student issues,

Qualities of distributed leadership

1. Leadership is shared among people in different roles.

2. Leadership is situational rather than hierarchical.

3. Authority is based upon expertise, rather than formal position (Wallach, Lambert, Copland, & Lowry, 2005).

Professional communities

Professional communities are groups of teachers, teacher leaders, and other professionals working together in redesigned small high schools who:

1. Work toward having a collective focus on student and adult learning;

2. Share common norms, values, and goals that are evident in their work with each other and in their classroom practice; and

3. Have sufficient time and structures available to build collaborative relationships and interdependence (Wallach & Gallucci, 2004).

and discuss classroom practice.

This trust led to increased risk taking among the teachers in these three small schools, as well as an increased sense of individual and group accountability to themselves, their colleagues, and their students.

As one teacher said: "[The pressure to make class more rigorous] isn't necessarily from our administration. The rigor question comes from accountability to our staff. Because we are a small school, because I know every one of these kids … I'm in a way accountable for their [achievement]. I know that next year, every single one of these kids is going to go to that room with my colleague. If they are all horrible writers or can't read for a purpose or any of that, it reflects on me."

Teachers' conversations happen in both structured and casual settings. For example, teachers commonly have structured meeting times where they discuss failing students, share curricular ideas, and plan for the future. But these conversations more frequently take place over lunch, in the halls, and after school.

Teachers in all three schools have made impressive progress toward turning the corner to instructional change through their commitment to adult learning in service of improved student learning. They demonstrate the importance of relationships, relevance, and rigor in adult learning and how the components of distributed leadership, a clear instructional focus, and well-developed professional community make the three R's more robust.

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Tracy Yarchi and Jim Slosson are experienced high school educators. They have worked in high schools long enough to see dozens of change initiatives, school reforms, promising practices, and silver bullets. Once they found the right tools, they were both able to work toward transformation.

THE IMAGE OF A WHEEL JUST CLICKED WITH ME

BY TRACY YARCHI

VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

I had been a high school English teacher for 15 years when my district transformed two traditional high schools into 10 small schools of choice. I want to share how the staff of one small school, with the help of professional development and a true sense of empowerment, created a small school culture and aligned the school's work to positively influence student achievement and learning.

In the beginning of this change process, I remember saying I needed time to reflect. But before I could see how the new ideas fit together, I was knocked over by waves of best-practice concepts from the sea of professional development. I found the new ideas inspiring, but I didn't know how to make them all work together. For example, Collaborative Analysis of Student Learning (CASL) would allow us to target problem areas in our instruction (Langer, Colton, &

Goff, 2003), but how did this relate to differentiated instruction? How did this all connect with brain research?

When Joe Evans, our small school director, returned from NSDC's annual conference in Vancouver in 2004, I was bracing myself for another concept. However, Evans calmly said, "Tracy, I've figured out how to make it all fit together. This is not new. It's a model that aligns all that we want to do. And student achievement is the focal point." I felt a sense of relief. Once the school started to develop and implement this model that we now call "Spokes," I found a focus and new meaning to my work.

My school is a communications and technology school, made up of 22 teachers and nearly 400 students. When we opened in fall 2002, we

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decided that developing a school culture was our first task, to give our students a sense of belonging.

The staff learned that by concentrating on school culture, we were also building a stronger learning community for ourselves. Deb Hartigan, our small school coordinator (equivalent to lead teacher), created a list of tasks that needed to be accomplished and asked staff to volunteer. We took ownership for what we called team commitments. Initially, I committed my time to the student-of-the-month team. Others chose to be a part of such teams as spirit wear, supply cabinet upkeep, and parent-teacher conference teams. We had already created an environment that encouraged teamwork, volunteerism, and purpose.

This positive environment was not going to sustain us, however. We needed to integrate professional development without feeling that we had one more task and no time to implement it. Therefore, when Evans

IT WORKED WHEN
I STARTED SMALL,
EXPANDED GRADUALLY

BY JIM SLOSSON

I've had some experience with systemic change — and you probably have, too. You did everything right. You communicated information based on research through your network of informal leaders. You looked at a lot of ideas and pulled together a plan. You involved all the stakeholders in conversations. You carefully piloted the new materials with building leaders. You hired a top-notch guest speaker to kick off your summit; the media was there. The supe expressed the whole district's commitment. You worked with the building principals on a follow-up plan. You spent a ton of money for new materials and buckets more on professional development.

Two years later, test scores are about the same, and the teachers can give you long lists of reasons why it isn't their fault that things didn't work better. You weren't looking for fault; you were looking for results, and you didn't get it. Who's to blame?

Nobody! There were huge odds against you from the beginning — you went head-on against a system evolved to resist new ideas and methods. Schools are the perfect equilibrium engine; they can absorb without noticeable change any new input despite any effort, time, or money you expend.

So how can an instructional leader overcome organizational inertia and create a genuine systemic change?

What if we started small — really small — got good results, grudgingly expanded, and finally reached the point where the rest of the system was demanding to be allowed to convert to the new methods?

We would need some things to get started.

- We would need one or two mav-

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erick staff members who had good ideas, a huge work ethic, and a compulsive need to be successful teachers. They would need to be the kind of folks who connect with kids and form relationships.

- They would need a powerful idea that is driven by instruction and results more than content and tradition.

- They would need a **VOICE OF EXPERIENCE** sponsor who could provide them with some resources, although money is seldom the real problem. The sponsor needs sufficient power to suspend, modify, bend, or ignore — but not break — some of the rules.

- We would need to expect good results that could be demonstrated in an objective way. Higher test scores, better grades, and fewer discipline referrals could be three ways.

- Then we would need to put them

brought his alignment model to the school, he wanted to be clear about how it would fit into our existing work and team culture. We were already meeting a couple times a month as a small school team and occasionally with our commitment teams. Now he wanted us to meet in department and grade-level teams. How was this going to work? Although our team meetings had been productive, getting teachers to buy into more meetings and a new idea was risky.

Evans' model of total school alignment looks like a wagon wheel. At the hub is student achievement, our focal point. The rim of the wheel consists of our support teams. Each spoke that connects the hub to the rim represents the tools we have acquired through professional development. These spokes are the specific ways we work to positively affect student achievement. To stretch our metaphor, this wheel is a functional and efficient device to move us forward. We call the model "Spokes" because it is the ideas and the work that we implement that impact student achievement.

Our essential spoke is common language. If we are to align our work, we must share definitions and speak the same language. For example, we realized pretty quickly that different teachers had different ideas about something as simple as writing an essay. Where one teacher may call this piece of writing a composition, another might expect an essay to simply mean a paragraph that explained an idea. Thus, if we expected students to understand what we assigned, then we needed to align how we used the language. In a series of team meetings, we brainstormed the words we needed to define, wrote definitions, and began talking about what we mean when we use the words.

Even though the spokes are where the work begins, the rim of the wheel is important, too. The rim of our wheel is us. We are the grade-level, the department, the administrative, and the central office teams that support the students. Grade-level and department teams tried to meet at least once a month after school, but this timing was not successful for all teams. Fortunately, Evans listened to us and understood our obstacles; he believes having time to meet as a team during the school day is important for student achievement. Now, grade-level teachers have common planning times and have committed to meeting at least once a week, and departments have agreed to meet during lunch a few times a month. At the end of the 2005-06 school year, grade-level and department teams revisited the total school alignment plan and created a schedule of topics for each 2006-07 meeting. Our goal is to align our work vertically and horizontally, keeping in mind our spokes.

In addition, these teams provide us opportunities to incorporate and practice the ideas from our professional development. Now we have a group where we can practice CASL, a spoke we are adapting to meet our needs. Differentiated instruction, another spoke, began to make sense once those of us who struggled with similar questions began to work together.

The administrative team is not a group of administrators. Instead, the team is a blend of Evans working with our guidance counselor and secretarial staff to collect data and disaggregate it for teams to analyze more easily. Through classroom observation and evaluation, Evans monitors and oversees the teams' alignment and implementation process. He also works with our small school coordinator to ensure that future professional development is aligned with the work that we are doing. As a liaison to the campus principal and the district office, Evans represents our work, needs, and concerns.

Since the inception of Spokes, I've learned to see the bigger picture and appreciate the synergy we develop from working with our teams. The culture building that we did early on set the groundwork for the implementation of Spokes. We've discovered that our creative efforts can go beyond creating a new lesson. We can positively affect student achievement when we align our work. Spokes is continually turning and moving us forward. The 12th-grade team proudly boasts that every senior completed the district-mandated senior exit action project because of the continual support from the team. In addition, school data show a 57% decrease in small school suspensions from the 2005-06 school year to the present. We are convinced that the aligned expectations for student behavior and intervention planning early in the year at team meetings attributed to this decrease.

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done

to work off in a corner, but inside the school, and let them work it out for a couple of years.

When the change was working, we would need to do some other things.

- We would need an informal leader to spread the news about the new system without belittling the old system. We just give it less attention and resources.
- We would need to find one or two staff willing to try the change, get good results, who will become our cheerleaders.
- We would need leaders who can integrate the new methods into their building schedule with minimal coercion.

Finally, when the system is proven and widely accepted, the leaders will need the courage to announce, "That's how we do it here. If that's not how you want to do it, you will probably need to do something else somewhere else."

Here's how it worked in our district.

CASE STUDY

An eccentric, retired principal, a former shop teacher, had an idea that we could improve math scores for struggling students if we used a different style of instruction. He wrote his own materials so he could teach math like a shop teacher.

With a little luck, he connected with our superintendent. We already had low math test scores that were very stable, and we didn't have much to lose by trying something new. The lucky thing was that the superintendent once taught General Math to kids with the lowest

For a big change:

- Find the right staff and a powerful idea.
- Provide a sponsor.
- Start small.
- Get results.
- Find a cheerleader.
- Expand gradually.
- Implement systemwide when the time is right.

scores. He had some intuition that this approach would work. His sponsorship made it possible to change the way we graded, gave credit, and funded new ideas. After the initial hiring and course approval, his involvement was minimal, but important. He did drop in now and then to see how things were going.

The rest of the math department wasn't impressed. They gave the new teacher a room with lousy furniture, no computer, and difficult kids they had been stacking up for three years. During the first year, the rest of the math department let the new guy know that he wasn't teaching math correctly. He was wasting valuable time by letting kids play games. Letting them work together was foolish because they helped each other. His handwritten lessons were not as good as the book. He spent too much time reviewing 6th-, 7th- and 8th-grade math. The labs, activities, and experiments were a waste of time. He wasn't covering enough. What was he thinking, making kids get 100% on tests? Their list of complaints was endless, tempered only by the acknowledgement that he was working with kids nobody else wanted anyway, and it was nice that he gave his overhead projector to another teacher.

At the end of the first year, the new guy had results. His kids had increased skills by 2.5 years. More of them passed the state test than the kids in Pre-Algebra, and they tied the kids in Algebra I, and, as a class, they had completed 88% of all assigned work — with 100% accuracy. He kept working to improve the program.

The change probably would have stopped with him, except that the principal had to create two more sections with difficult kids. After one quarter of using traditional methods, those two teachers asked if they could start using the new system. They, too,

had vastly improved results.

After three years, the principal and superintendent met with the math department. Their question was simple. "How come our least capable students continue to outscore our more capable students?"

Some of the teachers had long lists of reasons, many of them true. They blamed the kids and their lousy work ethic, their parents who didn't value the work and enforce homework rules, their previous teachers who didn't ensure that they knew the material, and society at large. They didn't blame the grandparents, but they were working on short notice.

The supe held his ground: "I want better results." Two teachers suggested that they would like to try the new method. That would make five out of 14.

The others argued more. He answered, "Maybe I wasn't clear. I want better results."

They argued some more. He replied, "Maybe I wasn't clear. If you want to keep working here, we'll get better results." (The superintendent claims he didn't say it that way. He probably didn't, but that's what the teachers heard — only because they were ready.)

He left, and some of the other teachers asked the principal if they might begin using the new program.

Epilogue: About half our students now use our homegrown math program. The results are not as dramatic as they were in the pilot phase, but they're substantially better than what we had for the eight previous years using conventional programs.

Real change takes years, and it starts small. Change is almost invisible. You will know change is working if you hear the cynics asking a tentative question like, "Do things feel different? It seems like things have changed, but I can't really put my finger on it." ▪

STANDARDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY MOVEMENT NEEDS TO

PUSH, NOT PUNISH

The education reform movement in the United States has increasingly focused on developing new standards for students. Virtually all states and many districts have begun creating standards for student learning, curriculum frameworks to guide instruction, and assessments to test students' knowledge.

These measures often are accompanied by accountability schemes that reward and sanction students, teachers, and schools based on trends in test scores. Although standards-based reform was intended to leverage systemwide changes in curriculum, teacher preparation, and school resources, in many cases the notions of standards and "accountability" have become synonymous with mandates for student testing that have little connection to policy initiatives that directly address the quality of teaching, the allocation of resources, or the nature of schooling.

Assessment data are helpful for creating more accountable systems to the extent that they provide relevant, valid, timely, and useful information about how individual students are doing and how schools are serving them. Indicators such as test scores are information for the accountability system; they are not the system itself. Accountability occurs only when a useful set of processes exists for interpreting and acting on the information in educationally productive ways. This may seem a straightforward notion, but it is significantly different from the predominant conceptions of accountability in the contemporary policy arena.

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO ACCOUNTABILITY

The American Psychological Association, American Educational Research Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education have issued standards for

BY LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND

the use of tests that indicate that test scores are too limited and unstable a measure to be used as the sole source of information for any major decision about student placement or promotion. The test-based accountability systems in dozens of states and urban school systems stand in contravention to these professional standards. However, the negative effects of grade retention and graduation sanctions should not become an argument for social promotion, the practice of moving students through the system without ensuring that they acquire the skills that they need. The alternatives include at least the following:

- Enhancing preparation and professional development for teachers to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills they need to teach a wide range of students to meet the standards;
- Redesigning school structures to support more intensive learning – including creating smaller school units that team teachers to work with smaller total numbers of students for longer periods of time;
- Employing schoolwide and classroom performance assessments that support more coherent curriculum and better inform teaching; and
- Ensuring that targeted supports and services are available for students when they are needed.

EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE CHANGE

Some urban districts have used these strategies to upgrade student learning and to create a more genuine accountability to parents and students. Their successes offer a very different model for standards-based reform, one that rests on the use of standards and assessments as a stimulus for professional development and curricular reform rather than as punishments for schools and students. Examples include the statewide reforms in Connecticut that have sup-

ported substantial improvements in a number of cities (featured here are New Britain, Norwalk, and Middletown – among the state's lowest-income and once lowest-achieving districts); New York City's School District #2, and New Haven, Calif.

Connecticut

Connecticut provides an especially instructive example of how state-level policy makers have used a standards-based starting point to upgrade teachers' knowledge and skills as a means of improving student learning. Since the early 1980s, the state has pursued a purposeful and comprehensive teaching quality agenda. Over 15 years, the state used teaching standards, followed later by student standards, to guide investments in school finance equalization, teacher salary increases tied to higher standards for teacher education and licensing, curriculum and assessment reforms, and a teacher support and assessment system that strengthened professional development. An emphasis on improving teaching was supported by a thoughtful assessment system used to guide professional development and curriculum reforms, but expressly not to retain students, deny diplomas, or punish schools. Dramatic gains in student achievement (accompanied by increases rather than declines in student graduation rates) and a plentiful supply of well-qualified teachers are two major outcomes of this agenda.

Among the 10 Connecticut districts that made the greatest progress in reading between 1990 and 1998, three — New Britain, Norwalk, and Middletown — are urban school systems in the group identified as the state's "neediest" districts based on the

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percentage of students eligible for free lunch programs and their state test scores. Critical to their progress were the state's teacher policies that have enabled districts to hire and retain highly qualified teachers, and the required beginning teacher program that provided state training for all mentors, thus increasing the knowledge and skills of veteran teachers along with beginners involved with the program. In addition, district officials credited state- and locally supported professional development, focused on how to teach reading through a balanced approach to whole language and skill-based instruction, how to address reading difficulties through specific intervention strategies, and how to diagnose and treat specific learning disabilities. The state's ability to provide extensive disaggregated data about local progress on curriculum goals measured by the state assessments guided these efforts, and high-quality professional development offerings supported them.

New York City District #2

A remarkably similar set of strategies produced similar results in New York City's Community School District #2, a diverse, multilingual district of 22,000 students, of whom more than 70% are students of color and more than half are from families officially classified as having incomes below the poverty level. Climbing achievement was a result of the district's decision to make professional development around common standards of teaching the central focus of management and the core strategy for school improvement.

The district has sponsored eight years of intensive work on teaching strategies for literacy development and four years on mathematics teaching. These efforts included intensive summer institutes, school-based coaching, partnerships with local universities, and a strong focus on recruitment and

evaluation of teachers and principals. District #2, and later New York City, adopted the curriculum frameworks of the New Standards Project and formed an alliance with the University of Pittsburgh's new Institute for Learning, piloting its performance assessments of student learning, which use portfolios and extensive student work samples as well as constructed response tests. Assessment results were used to guide professional development and the assignment of the most expert teachers to students with the greatest educational needs.

New Haven, Calif.

A similar set of strategies enabled New Haven, Calif., to evolve from a low-achieving school district with the usual host of urban problems to a high-achieving district widely acknowledged to have an expert teaching force. In the early 1980s, superintendent Guy Emanuele launched a focused reform emphasizing extensive recruitment and careful hiring of teachers, rigorous evaluation, extensive mentoring and professional development, and support for teacher leadership. As in Connecticut and in District #2, standards for students were developed and enacted as a professional development activity, using state and national frameworks as the starting point for engaging teachers in thinking through what students should know and be able to do, how it should be assessed, and what curriculum and instructional strategies could allow them to succeed. The standards and assessment system is used as a tool for instructional planning, guiding changes in staffing, instructional programming, resource allocation, and class configurations.

IMPROVING THE CHANCES OF STUDENT SUCCESS

Ultimately, accountability is not only about measuring student learning but actually improving it.

Consequently, genuine accountability involves supporting changes in teaching and schooling that can heighten the probability that students meet standards.

The changes in teaching and assessment strategies needed to achieve new content and performance standards require increased knowledge and skills on the part of teachers. Teachers need deep understanding of subject matter, student learning approaches, and diverse teaching strategies to develop practices that will allow students to reach these new standards. To provide this kind of expertise to students, districts must pay much greater attention to the ways in which they recruit, hire, and support new teachers and the ways in which they support veteran teachers. Cumbersome and counterproductive personnel practices in many large district bureaucracies have resulted in the hiring of hundreds of untrained teachers when qualified personnel were available and in the attrition of far too many beginning teachers who are left to sink or swim without support. These practices create a continuous revolving door of inexperienced and under-prepared teachers in schools where student failure rates are the highest. Neither standards nor assessments will help students learn more effectively if they do not have a stable community of competent teachers to support them in their learning. Until school systems address the dramatic inequalities in students' access to qualified teachers, other curriculum and assessment policies will prove ineffective in increasing achievement.

In addition, schools and districts need to provide systematic supports for ongoing teacher learning in the form of time for shared teacher planning, opportunities for assessing teaching and learning, more exposure to technical expertise and resources, and opportunities for networking with other colleagues. These invest-

ments in building teachers' capacities pay off in improved student outcomes (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). In addition, as teachers learn to develop and use performance assessments, they discover more about their students and the effects of their teaching. This allows them to build more responsive and supportive teaching strategies that support the attainment of higher standards for a greater range of students (Darling-Hammond, Ancess, & Falk, 1995).

Providing these opportunities will require a clearer focus on teacher learning as a critical ingredient for enhanced student learning and as the most important preventive for the escalating costs of compensatory education, special education, grade retention, and other manifestations of student and school failure. Allocating resources to support teacher learning includes restructuring school time and staffing patterns to allow teachers time to work and learn together.

Schools that have restructured to provide more shared planning and professional development time for teachers are also more successful at meeting the needs of diverse learners. When teachers can share knowledge with each other and can access expertise beyond the school, they learn how to succeed with students who require special insights and strategies. This kind of restructuring of time often requires rethinking staffing arrangements as well as schedules. In U.S. schools, where only 43% of total education staff are classroom teachers (as compared to 60% to 80% in many European schools and in Japan, for example), the costs of supporting non-teaching staff absorb the resources needed to provide planning time for teachers. Thus, whereas teachers in many other countries have as much as 15 to 20 hours per week for joint planning and learning, U.S. teachers have only three to five hours weekly

for class preparation, usually spent alone (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). Creating time for teachers to work together often means reducing the number of nonteaching staff, pullout teachers, and specialists and reassigning them to teaching teams in order to increase staff for classroom teaching.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ALL

The issue of standards and accountability cannot be separated from issues of teaching, assessment, school organization, professional development, and funding. Efforts aimed at better supporting learning for all students so that they can successfully progress through school must include changes that address the overall fabric of education.

Academic success for a greater range of students will be facilitated by initiatives that:

- Use standards and authentic assessments of student achievement as indicators of progress for improved teaching and needed supports, not as arbiters of rewards and sanctions.
- Provide professional learning opportunities for teachers that build their capacity to teach ways that are congruent with contemporary understandings about learning, use sophisticated assessments to inform teaching, and meet differing needs.
- Encourage the design of classroom and grouping structures that create extended, intensive teacher-student relationships.
- Create strategies for school accountability that examine the appropriateness and adequacy of students' learning opportunities

and create levers and supports for school change.

Ultimately, raising standards for students so that they learn what they need to know requires raising standards for the system, so that it provides the kinds of teaching and school settings students need in order to learn. Genuine accountability requires both higher standards and greater supports for student, teacher, and school learning.

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BY ANNEMARIE B. JAY AND JACK McGOVERN

NOT JUST *a* MANAGER ANYMORE

Principal's role as literacy leader moves to the front

As you walk into Washington Elementary School, you are likely to see a tall middle-aged man dressed in a Cat in the Hat suit. If you are lucky enough to be a student here, you'll know that's just the principal. "He really cares about our reading," said one student. Within three years, this principal took his school from a place where only 15% of the children scored at the proficient level to a learning community in which 80% exceeded state standards. He moved from managing his school to becoming a literacy leader.

How does the principal keep the focus on student learning and skillfully identify best literacy practice? How does what is learned about best literacy practice translate into better schools that demonstrate improved student achievement?

In the reality of school life, management tasks require the principal's time and attention (Portin, 2004; Smith & Andrews, 1989). However, management tasks must be secondary to instructional tasks. Schools are learning labs for children; those who oversee instruction must be learners, too. As literacy leaders, principals are expected to be knowledgeable about all instructional trends and practices in general as well as what is specifically happening in each classroom in the

> **Management tasks must be secondary to instructional tasks.**

building. The principal's ability to distinguish between strong and weak practices is critical; quality instruction must be recognized and promoted in order to promote literacy learning.

Given the multiple tasks for which a principal is responsible, how does he or she function as both a literacy leader and a learner in a learning community?

LEAD LEARNING BY EXAMPLE

The successful principal sustains literacy achievement by leading by example, learning by example, and creating conditions for collaborative professional learning. The National Association of Elementary School Principals has published standards for what principals should know and do in order to put student and staff learning at the center of their leadership (2001b). Meeting these standards transforms principals not only into lead learners but literacy leaders. As a learning-centered principal, DuFour (2002) recommends that "principals function as learning leaders rather than instructional leaders" by pursuing ways to provide both students and teachers with additional time and support necessary to improve literacy learning.

If principals are to lead learning by example, they and their staff need to make a firm commitment to continuous improvement of literacy instruction in their school. Here we investigate six characteristics of the principal as successful literacy leader.

> **Being a lead learner requires the principal to join the faculty in learning.**

1. LEAD LEARNING

Being a lead learner requires the principal to join the faculty in learning (Knapp, Copland & Talbert, 2003). Rather than functioning as the expert who oversees the novice learners, the principal is a team member who actively participates in professional learning.

Principal 1:

A new elementary principal in suburban Philadelphia held monthly faculty meetings that were much different than those the staff experienced before. Principal One clustered teachers in discussion groups to review data from state assessments, district rubrics, and student work samples. The group responded to focus questions and engaged in purposeful examination of the data. The focus was always on how students were performing and how instruction could be improved to meet their learning needs. Principal One always participated with one or more of the cluster groups. The collaborative decision making of the groups led to positive changes in instruction. For example, the groups decided that they would select and prioritize teaching strategies for comprehension. The principal participated in the discussions and offered to teach in classrooms if invited. Once invited into a classroom, the principal taught as a colleague who was interested in achieving the group's common goal. Through the demonstration lessons, the principal gained information on the selected strategies and their impact on students. In subsequent meetings, the group refined techniques and schoolwide practices related to the strategies.

While the format change in the faculty meetings provided a regular focus on improving students' learning, the collaborative work also allowed the principal to learn about staff, students, and curriculum. She was learning to lead literacy events as she learned about the school's literacy strengths and needs. In addition, her teaching became a common occurrence in the building.

2. FOCUS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Principals and their teachers need time to think and talk about the teaching that occurs in their schools (Drago-Severson, 2004). Elementary principals who lead literacy learning use formative assessment data at the individual, classroom, and building levels to inform ongoing instructional practice.

Principal 2:

A large wall outside of Principal Two's office, accessible to the principal and staff only, is covered with colorful sticky notes with up-to-the-minute records of every child's literacy performance. This wall is known as the data wall. Each note serves as the focus of dialogue with teachers, parents, and students because formative assessment informs practice about what a child needs in order to improve. Principal Two takes the notes with him to grade-level meetings so that teachers can focus on individual students and grade-level needs. When he meets with parents, the notes are placed at the meeting table so that the student's needs and the school's efforts are clearly evident. In the teachers' workroom, there is a display of classroom performance profiles. This at-hand information encourages discussions about grade-level literacy and pedagogy when the principal meets with individual teachers and grade-level teams.

In all of the discussions in this school, the data wall serves to continuously refocus conversation around individual students' literacy needs and

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the school and teacher responses to those needs. This moves the attention from abstract instructional goals to applied teaching practices.

3. DEVELOP SCHOOLWIDE CAPACITY FOR LEADERSHIP

Literacy leadership requires that a principal create a focus on aligning stakeholders to provide a quality education for each child in his school.

Principal 3:

Principal Three's odyssey began when the school learned that 85% of its 4th-grade students ranked below proficient on the statewide assessment. Because of his training in the Comer Process, a schoolwide intervention program that mobilizes the adult community to take shared responsibility for student achievement (Comer, Ben-Avie, Haynes, & Joyner, 1999), the principal understood that he needed to bring all the stakeholders together to find a solution. He convened the first of many sessions to discuss possible ways the school and the community could work together to guarantee students' success. The library was packed with teachers, parents, community members, and curriculum consultants. Principal Three began by sharing the scores and asking, "How can we improve? We know our kids are capable." This brief statement led to exploration of materials, best practices, and new connections with parents. Eventually the school changed schedules, initiated flexible grouping, and used student data to inform every instructional decision. Three years after the first meeting, 79% of the school's 4th graders scored proficient or advanced on the state assessment.

By creating a learning community with plenty of opportunity for involvement, Principal Three was able to facilitate the collaborative decision making of participants. He maintained two rules of thumb: No one was allowed to generate negative comments, and nothing was off-limits if it would help the students achieve. This

powerful example of building school-wide capacity for leadership demonstrates how a principal became a catalyst for hope in a culture of despair. Lambert (1998) pinpoints the complexity of the skills needed for building leadership capacity when she reminds us that "it is more difficult to build leadership capacity among colleagues than to tell colleagues what to do. It is more difficult to be full partners with other adults engaged in hard work than to evaluate and supervise subordinates."

4. CREATE CONDITIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Writing about the critical role of leadership, Marzano (2003) outlines the importance of creating shared leadership through a team approach: "Members of the leadership team should cultivate the dispositions of optimism, honesty, and consideration. In the final analysis, these characteristics might be as important as those that address the more technical aspects of school reform …" (p. 178).

Principal 4:

At a small independent school, a group of teachers and their principal came together to share a vision of powerful literacy instruction. Keene and Zimmerman's "Mosaic of Thought" (1997) provided the catalyst for this effort. The group held voluntary weekly study group sessions, focusing on each chapter and discussing a series of questions. For many teachers, this was the first time that they had had the opportunity to discuss vital instructional concepts such as comprehension, fluency, and strategic instruction. The focus of faculty conversations moved from "Our students are misbehaving at dismissal time" to "What do we really know about our practice and how our kids learn?"

Resounding messages in the literature convey the need for support, encouragement, and recognition of the best literacy practices of teachers

in the classrooms as well as shared expertise in group professional learning situations (King, 2002; NAESP, 2001b; Booth & Rowsell, 2002). McAndrew (2005) states that in order to have a "winning literacy team," the literacy leader needs to create and communicate a vision, be a model of learning, coach instructional techniques that are right for his or her particular learning community, nurture competence and collaboration, and "encourage the heart" through reflective practice.

5. USE DATA TO INFORM DECISIONS

Research suggests using multiple sources of data to drive decision making that is mutually arrived at by principal and staff (King, 2002; NAESP, 2001a, Booth & Rowsell, 2002). A culture of informed collaboration promotes sound curricular decisions about literacy teaching and learning.

Principal 5:

Two large Title I schools began using an early literacy program with a major technology component as part of the supplemental services offered to less able students in transitional primary classrooms. According to the assessments offered as part of the program, the children were making progress individually and as a class. Participants at meetings that included Title I staff, classroom teachers, and a highly involved, literacy-focused principal, examined changes in instruction and questioned the relevance of scores from the program assessments. The group decided to compare program data with other data sources. Data from basal publisher's tests, the Title I battery of tests, and a norm-referenced standardized assessment were triangulated and compared to the program data. The opportunity to study these comparisons collegially helped the group to realize that the program data were strongly aligned with the publishers' and standardized assessments. More importantly,

the group recognized that the program's student resources, allotted time on task, and focused conversations of professionals were all key factors in promoting the literacy achievement of young learners. The principal, working as a group member, analyzed the data and gained insights into the dynamics of literacy learning in the classrooms.

Multiple sources of data were critical components of the decision-making process. The shared experience of reviewing and analyzing the data as a community of learners was more beneficial than if the principal were the sole reviewer and analyst.

6. USE RESOURCES CREATIVELY

Research emphasizes the importance of arranging resources —people, time, and money — in creative ways such as rearranging the day's schedule to provide time for teachers to work together on a common pedagogical issue (King, 2002).

Principal 6:

As the head of a lower division of a large K-12 Quaker school, Principal Six uses his position to celebrate good literature and encourage conversations. Once a week, 20-30 students attended a "Literacy Lunch" with the principal. For the price of 40 minutes and a slice of pizza, students discussed books that they wanted to share with their classmates and their principal. These lunches provide a wonderful opportunity to use social settings to increase enthusiasm for reading. In addition, all faculty meetings in Principal Six's school begin with a "What are we reading?" segment in which teachers share their current literary interest. When principals provide time for teachers to share what they read, they speak volumes about their belief in the value of lifelong reading. The hallways also speak to the intense focus of literature; lists of the children's favorite titles adorn public spaces and books are everywhere.

Principals who are literacy leaders interact not only with their teachers

about literacy teaching and learning, they also interact with the students. Firsthand knowledge of what students can do or find difficult to do can help the principal provide and participate in professional development.

CONNECTING LITERACY LEARNING AND LEADING

Connecting literacy learning and leading is a complex, necessary part of the multitasking role of the elementary principal. The elementary principal needs to involve herself in forums that help ensure integral connections between learning and leading. Just as the principal must be a catalyst for leading learning within the school, she herself needs a catalyst to learn, reflect on practice, and grow. Joining other principals to study and share instructional practices helps principals become thoughtful about what, why, and how literacy learning occurs in their schools. Such forums promote skillful literacy learning.

When a principal's participation in promoting literacy is skillful, she accomplishes several things: First, she learns more about the process of literacy instruction; second, she learns more about the professional development process; third, the principal nurtures a culture of respect for all learners — children and adults; fourth, the positive collaboration between principal and staff helps promote motivation among faculty and foster habits toward literacy learning within the school. Collaboration between principals and staff nurtures learning among professionals and positively influences the advancement of literacy teaching and learning in schools.

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STANDARDS ASSESSMENT GUIDES GEORGIA'S TRANSFORMATION

Over the past three years, I've been able to see data that thrills me — NSDC's Standards for Staff Development are changing staff development in my district and my state. I believe this is beginning to happen across the country. As former director of professional learning in Gwinnett County Public Schools and president of the Georgia Staff Development Council (GSDC), I can say that the standards have changed the way I work every single day.

Here's how the transformation is taking place in my state. In 2003, the Georgia Department of Education adopted NSDC's standards as the state's professional learning standards and encouraged all districts in the state to do the same. My home district, Gwinnett County Public Schools, the state's largest, adopted the standards just months before Georgia did. Focusing on the standards helps us as we ensure that every educator has the opportunity to experience high-quality professional learning as part of their daily work.

Our work in Georgia is supported by a strong relationship between the state Department of Education and GSDC. The Department of Education and GSDC work together to provide school systems with the necessary tools and knowledge to improve professional learning. This collaboration really spurred our statewide changes in staff development practices.

FROM ADOPTION TO MEASURING ALIGNMENT

I began to see the standards at work when staff at Gwinnett had the opportunity to measure how well we were meeting NSDC's standards. The Department of Education asked Gwinnett and another system to pilot an online version of NSDC's Standards Assessment Inventory (SAI) (Richardson, 2006). The state has since contracted with NSDC for ongoing use of the SAI; other sites, including the state of Missouri, several districts in Alabama, and individual districts around the country are also using this tool. This anonymous, online assessment

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measures alignment of professional learning practices with NSDC's standards. The survey contains five questions that provide data about alignment with each of the 12 standards (Hirsh, 2006).

About 7,000 certified staff in Gwinnett County completed the SAI in spring 2007. With 10,000 educators in our system, that's a solid return rate. A teacher can log into the system from any computer and complete the task in about 20 minutes. Having a school-based staff developer in each Gwinnett school ensures that high numbers of teachers complete the survey and helps move us toward continuous improvement. In my district and state, we now have three to four years of SAI data to guide our improvements toward high-quality professional learning.

Our data indicate that Georgia and Gwinnett are weakest in meeting the same two standards. Learning Communities and Evaluation have consistently been our areas that need improvement. I can see these data at the system level in a simple, real-time report that accompanies the SAI. Principals can view the same reports for their own schools. The anonymous survey protects teachers, while the visible number of responses lets principals know how many of the staff have completed the survey. We now have a tool to measure what we value: professional learning practices at the school and district level.

Imagine having a principal ask for help with coaching because her school scored lowest on SAI question 29: "We observe each other's classroom instruction as one way to improve our teaching." How do I respond to such questions? I urge schools to marry student achievement data to their SAI data. For example, if reading comprehension is an area in which teachers need to improve as indicated by student data, schools must pair their adult work in reading comprehension with areas on the standards that need improvement, such as teachers observing each other teach, and, in this case, observing research-based teaching practices in reading comprehension.

INTEGRATING ANOTHER STANDARDS TOOL

Now that we've been using the SAI to gather data for years, what's next for our state to keep improving as we implement the standards every day? We continue modeling with school leaders and working as communities of learners, studying the data and making decisions about improvement efforts in our schools. Working with a

This is the first NSDC's standards column by Lea Arnau. The columns will be available at www.nsdc.org.

school-based staff developer at each school in Gwinnett, we have studied the SAI data and have begun to examine the Innovation Configurations (ICs) for each standard. Pat Roy, Shirley Hord, and Stephanie Hirsh's work, *Moving the NSDC Standards Into Practice: Innovation Configurations, Vols. I & II* (2003 & 2005), provides a rubric illustrating implementation for each of the 12 standards. The ICs show us what this improvement looks like for 11 roles, including teachers, school-based staff developers, principals, central office staff, directors of staff development, superintendents, school boards, institutions of higher education, state education agencies, external technical assistance providers, and professional associations.

In practice, each school determines appropriate professional learning practices based on the school's student data, the SAI data, and the ICs. To continue the reading comprehension example, a principal reviewing the IC for principals in Learning Communities would know that one of her tasks is preparing teachers for skillful collaboration and that the content around which this collaboration will take place is reading comprehension.

> As a school system, Gwinnett is considering requiring schools submitting professional learning proposals to include an analysis of how the proposed learning improves student learning and how the learning will align with the standards for staff development.

This work happens at all levels in our state. At the system level, leaders study the ICs for system leaders. In Georgia Staff Development Council, we study the ICs for professional organizations. All across the state, we are focusing on two main standards, Learning Communities and Evaluation. At Gwinnett, staff members have focused primarily on building effective learning teams, training coaches as school-based staff developers, and evaluating professional learning in a way that shows connections to improved student learning. GSDC's work mirrors this focus.

GSDC's board has used NSDC's standards and SAI data from across the state to plan the learning we do together as a professional organization. The teaching leaders at our twice-yearly conferences address these areas for growth. At GSDC's spring 2007 conference, Joellen Killion, NSDC's deputy executive director, worked with us to lead us toward meaningful evaluation of professional learning. Each district and school represented was challenged to take the learning back from the conference and to continue to study in teams and coach each other to ensure continued growth.

PUSHING FURTHER IN THE FUTURE

As a school system, Gwinnett is considering requiring schools submitting professional learning proposals to include an analysis of how the proposed learning improves student learning and how the learning will align with the standards for staff development. If educators have student data that lead them to improve reading comprehension, then they must review their SAI data and address how their adult learning will be aimed toward improving the standards in which they are weakest.

Work toward implementing the standards has led Georgia to believe that we should reward adult learners more when they include proof that their new adult learning is being implemented in the classroom and is improving student learning. This weighted professional learning unit is part of the recertification process in Georgia, and holds educators accountable for the learning upon which we spend so much time and money. Right now, the weighted professional learning unit is an option. I have to ask, why do we spend any time or money on adult learning if we do not *expect* this new learning to be implemented in practice by these adult learners?

Though it sounds like we have done a lot in Georgia, the work is just beginning. We are constantly aware of modeling learning communities. In metro Atlanta, a group of staff developers has formed a learning community to focus on the Evaluation standard. The group meets regularly and focuses on problems of practice with regard to evaluation of staff development. We have learned to begin our initiatives with data and with evaluation. We share our SAI data and question each other on the work we are doing that improves our staff development and NSDC's standards.

Finally, we work to improve ourselves as members of learning communities by modeling our work as our ideal for high-quality professional learning that is results-driven, standards-based, and job-embedded. We have named our problem, formulated our theory of change, and continuously work to improve our evaluation of the results. With NSDC's standards as our guide and focus, the Standards Assessment Inventory as one of our evaluation tools and data pieces, and the Innovation Configurations as our deep discussion and analysis piece, we believe that all teachers in all schools *will* experience high-quality professional learning as part of their daily work.

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BALANCED CONVERSATIONS PROMOTE SHARED OWNERSHIP

School culture involves individuals' collective beliefs, values, and propensities to act in certain ways. These beliefs, values, and propensities are both manifested in and shaped by the group's conversations. A reasonable goal for grade-level or department teams and others working to improve school culture, then, is to become competent in conversing about their work.

One skill groups need to develop is the ability to have balanced conversations. Balanced conversations are essential for educators to exchange ideas and make informed decisions. Balanced does not mean that members speak for similar amounts of time, but rather that each member engages in relevant conversation about the meeting's topics. Having each group member actively involved in the conversation is essential for all to feel ownership of group decisions, a defining quality of successful groups.

In talking about group work, I deliberately use the term *ownership* rather than *buy-in*, which subliminally connotes more questionable goals and presuppositions. The term *buy-in* assumes the goal is selling, presupposes a salesperson, and suggests *sales resistance* as an expected part of the interaction. Balanced conversations promote shared ownership, which begets understanding, commitment, and follow-through.

Over time, groups can develop the expertise that allows them to positively shape school culture. Not all groups become expert in managing meetings, just as not all teachers become experts (Berliner, 1994). Berliner found that developing expertise requires study and practice over hundreds of hours and multiple years. To help groups achieve competence, professional development leaders provide training, gradually add meeting tools, and enable structured reflections.

ROADBLOCKS TO BALANCED CONVERSATIONS

Group leaders, facilitators, or professional developers must help group members resolve three types of challenges to get to balanced conversations: airtime imbalance among members, talkative leaders, and limited protocols for con-

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ducting meetings.

Airtime imbalance. Members sometimes complain that their team spends a lot of time discussing and reaching agreements about topics, but some members stay quiet and then walk away and do what they want. When the quiet ones are asked about not keeping the group's agreements, the outliers always seem to have good reasons for why they have deviated from the decisions. When it happens repeatedly, teams wonder why they should take time to discuss issues if some members are going to violate the group's decisions.

I've also encountered settings where one or two members monopolize airtime. Often, they are the first to speak, setting the context for the whole conversation. They may be people who think best by externalizing their thoughts; they may have limited capacity to restrain impulsivity; they also may simply be intensely involved in the topic. Usually, however, these people are not conscious of the effects they have on a group. When this dynamic occurs repeatedly, the group adapts by decreasing participation, and members may have a limited sense of their ability to influence the group. As personal efficacy decreases, so does the desire to invest energy in conversations. The result is decisions that increasingly bear the fingerprints of the high talkers without regard for other group members.

Talkative leaders. I worked with a group in which the group leader posed a question and, before anyone responded, launched into her own detailed answer. Since this happened repeatedly, group members learned to be quiet until the leader had finished. Then, only with prompting, did members add their own ideas. In another setting, a principal confided she was trying to get the faculty to be more interactive. She started the group brainstorming on a topic, but then dominated the recording of ideas. She was unaware that her behaviors worked against her goal of participatory decision making.

Too few protocols. Sound consideration of important issues requires diversity of voice and opinion. In some settings, groups are conscious of wanting to hear from all members, yet lack tools to achieve this goal. They may not have a repertoire of strategies to keep members focused or to create situations in which all members can be heard. Sometimes, what is missing is how to reach decisions after dialogue or strategies to handle violations of group norms.

In each issue of *JSD*, Robert J. Garmston writes about how to create collaborative work environments that result in improved student learning. His columns can be found at www.nsdc.org.

collaborative culture / ROBERT J. GARMSTON

REMOVING ROADBLOCKS

The most effective groups combine two resolutions to these issues. The first is to help group leaders develop a growing tool kit of protocols to manage challenging group dynamics. A second is to have group leaders use structured reflection to increase group and individual consciousness of behaviors.

Provide tools. In technology, the word "protocols" refers to rules that allow two or more pieces of equipment to "talk to each other"; in diplomacy, protocols govern diplomatic etiquette; in medicine and science, they are rules for faithful reproduction of processes.

In instruction, protocols establish environments for learning by providing prescriptions for conversations. They designate a topic, separate listening from speaking, require specified thinking processes, stipulate time limits, and set topic boundaries. Protocols are especially necessary for hard-to-talk-about topics because they provide structures for psychological safety. Using a variety of protocols increases the effectiveness and efficiency of group meeting. Protocols are often referred to as processes, strategies, or group tools. *The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups* (Christopher-Gordon, 1999) outlines 50 meeting protocols, including those listed here.

Brainstorming is an example of a protocol to generate ideas. The protocol "paraphrase passport," in which each new speaker must paraphrase the preceding speaker as a passport to speaking himself, is designed to assist listening. Ritualized pauses (before speaking, members silently count down "three-two-one" after a person has talked) aid reflection in dialogue.

Text-based protocols provide rich interaction for all members. Let's say a group is developing a new homework policy. In "say something," pairs read a short piece of relevant text, pausing at the end of passages to say something to each other about the content. They might talk about agreements with the text, connect the reading to their own homework practices, or raise questions or challenges. Now

a full-group conversation can take place knowing that each member has been mentally engaged and put ideas in play. Text-based protocols — or any subgroup conversation protocols — also make it easier for members to present to the full group and maintain anonymity since individuals can report, "Our group thought … ."

Structured reflection. Adults do not learn from experience but rather from reflecting on experience. Reflection helps address group dynamics and individual behaviors. Meetings improve when groups reflect about their work. Conversations become more balanced and productive. The group increases control over members' own practices, which leads to increased satisfaction and willingness to participate.

Group leaders can provide work groups with several ways of bringing consciousness and self-monitoring to their work. The simple question, "What seems to be going on here?" asked of a group that in the moment is functioning ineffectively stimulates observations that lead to corrections. Self-monitoring questions illuminate perceptions, decisions, and decision products, which inevitably leads members to better practices.

The following protocol gets astounding results: After a segment of conversation, ask each member to silently reflect on the questions, "What decisions did you make about when and how to participate? What were the effects of those decisions on you and on others?" Allow think time and have members either write responses, share with a neighbor or with the whole group. When this happens several times, group members sharpen their metacognitive skills and increase personal and team effectiveness.

See the box below for a way to evoke reflection about balanced conversations. The inventory is from *The Adaptive School: Developing and Facilitating Collaborative Groups Syllabus* (Garmston & Wellman, 2002.)

Too often, without professional learning opportunities, groups are doomed to chaotic and frustrating meetings. These meetings are unlikely to produce change or any other positive result. Creating a collaborative culture is a complex goal worthy of the investment in time and energy. The informed participation of many voices in balanced conversation is one skill that enables groups to progress toward that complex goal.

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Seeking a balance

Give each member this inventory. Tally the results and have the group discuss the cumulative answers as well as where members found the greatest similarities and differences between their own answers and the group's responses as a whole.

AT THIS MEETING:

• We balanced participation	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
• The degree to which I felt listened to	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
• The degree to which I listened to others	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

THE JOURNEY TO CULTURAL PROFICIENCY IS A SIZEABLE CHALLENGE

Demographic shifts are bringing schools more diverse populations. Educators are striving to respond, but many lack the cultural proficiency to address the needs of a diverse student population.

Most educational leaders are aware that their districts have a gap in achievement among racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups of students but are unaware that the problem goes beyond achievement test scores. More importantly, they may not understand what steps to take to address the issue.

The first step is to assess the extent of the staff's cultural awareness. Using the tool described in the summer 2007 *JSD* (see **www.nsdc.org** for the previous column), gather data to illustrate that your district is not untouched by this pressing concern. The next step is to convince the district's leaders that staff members need professional learning experiences that will help them develop cultural proficiency.

Because few educators understand the impact of culture on teaching and learning, educators tend to respond to system inequities with technical solutions such as curriculum alignment, small-group instruction, extended learning time, learning communities, data-driven decision-making models, and school-based social services. While these aspects of school improvement are important, they do not adequately address systemic inequities. To create schools where each and every student is successful, educators must also address relationships, especially with students and families who have been historically disenfranchised from the educational system.

To develop such relationships, educators must be culturally proficient to help them know and understand stu-

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dents and families from backgrounds different than their own. Convincing district leaders of the need to focus on relationships means helping them understand why cultural proficiency is important. Present this information in a formal professional development session for a large, hierarchical district or through informal discussions in a smaller district or one with a flatter organizational structure. Begin by describing two foundational premises: that cultural understanding matters and that teacher beliefs matter in improving student performance.

CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING MATTERS

A primary function of schooling is to transmit culture. In our society, this means teaching students the democratic values of independence, equality, autonomy, initiative, and individuality so they become productive citizens. These cultural values are reflected in everything we do in school, from the curricula and books we teach, to how we teach, and to who teaches (Lynch, 1992). For students who acquire these cultural values at home, schooling is about learning knowledge and skills, and these values are reinforced at school. But students who come with a different value set must learn not only the academic content, but also the values or implicit rules of schooling.

For example, because white middle-class Americans value verbal prowess as evidence of initiative, assertiveness, and responsibility, students are expected to jump in to class discussions to express their thoughts. In contrast, many other cultures view this free-flowing participation as rude and believe students should wait to be recognized before responding. Without this cultural understanding, teachers may misinterpret student behavior. When a student sits quietly during class discussions, the teacher may assume the student doesn't have anything to say or is not very bright, rather than considering the alternate explanation of cultural difference. Because the teacher believes that the problem lies within the student (deficit thinking), he or she may respond by lowering expectations for the student, reducing the curriculum rigor, or using "drill-and-kill" assignments. In turn, students become bored, disengaged, and/or alienated, resulting in underachievement and over-referral to discipline and special education.

Culturally proficient teachers understand that culture is

In each issue of *JSD*, Sarah W. Nelson, above, and Patricia L. Guerra write about the importance of and strategies for developing cultural awareness in teachers and schools. The columns are available at www.nsdc.org.

cultural proficiency / SARAH W. NELSON & PATRICIA L. GUERRA

the lens through which we see and understand the world (Garcia & Dominguez, 1997) and that cultures vary from one another in important ways, including communication style, power distribution, role expectations, and identity development (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 2003). This broadened cultural lens allows teachers to see students for what they bring and use student knowledge and contributions as a bridge for teaching and learning. As a result, students feel valued and are engaged in learning, leading to higher achievement.

BELIEFS MATTER

Personal beliefs have a powerful influence on what we know and do. When we are exposed to new information, we unconsciously sift it through our personal beliefs to make sense of it. In doing so, we often reject or modify aspects of the information that do not fit with the beliefs we hold (Bandura, 1982). For example, when we attend professional development on a new reading program, what we take away depends heavily on our personal beliefs (Pohan, 1996). If we do not believe all children can learn, we may not implement the reading program as intended. Rather than using the critical thinking activities recommended in the teacher's guide, we might instead ask certain students to answer basic recall questions. We do not knowingly sort and select information that fits with our beliefs. In fact, few of us are even aware of our personal beliefs.

Lack of awareness about beliefs is troubling because, for many, life experiences and education have led to developing deficit beliefs about certain cultural, linguistic, and economic groups. Those who hold deficit beliefs see some students as having deficiencies (lack of intelligence, limited motivation, poor social behavior) that interfere with learning (Valencia, 1997). As a result, the focus of education becomes fixing students rather than building on their strengths and assets. Decades of research suggests that teachers' personal beliefs about diverse students lead to differential treatment, expectations, and outcomes (Baron, Tom & Cooper, 1985; Delpit, 1996; Love & Kruger, 2005; Rist, 1970). These deficit beliefs can be found among educators of all races, ethnicities, and economic classes.

Educators who develop cultural proficiency can examine their beliefs from a new standpoint. Because what was once unconscious is now conscious, they become mindful of how their beliefs drive their practices. By being mindful, they are able to avoid judging the behavior of students and families based on a single perspective of how things should be done.

LEADING THE JOURNEY

Taking educators on this journey to cultural proficien-

Can you lead a cultural proficiency journey? Find out with the NSDC Tool, p. 61.

cy is a sizeable challenge. Not everyone has the constitution or willingness to assume this responsibility. Diversity trainers must be comfortable addressing conflict that at times can be confrontational. Recognizing whether you would be comfortable leading this effort is important. Without a knowledgeable and skilled leader, the effort could backfire and actually make matters worse. The wise staff developer is willing to learn new skills, but is also aware when he or she may not be the best person to lead the learning.

Am I the one? To be effective, the staff development leader must have deep cultural knowledge to provide the context for exploring and understanding beliefs, facilitation skills to create a trusting and supportive environment, and conviction enough to keep going even when it would be easier to abandon the effort.

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THE JOURNEY IS CULTURAL PROFICIENCY

Can you take the lead?

A re you the one to lead your school's journey toward cultural proficiency? Use this assessment tool to find out if you have the necessary knowledge, skills, and conviction. If you do, it may be time to step up to leadership. If not, this tool suggests upgrading your skills and attitudes and ways to find someone who is ready right now.

You have KNOWLEDGE of:

• Culture-specific information.	Yes	No
• Dimensions of culture.	Yes	No
• Culture in practice, policies, and procedures.	Yes	No
• Common culture clashes in school (e.g. instruction, behavior management, parent involvement).	Yes	No
• Educator beliefs that act as barriers to teaching and learning.	Yes	No
• Alternate explanations.	Yes	No
• Mindfulness.	Yes	No
• Culturally responsive curriculum, instruction, and leadership.	Yes	No

You have the SKILLS to:

• Facilitate groups (e.g. develop group norms, mediate conflict).	Yes	No
• Develop learning communities.	Yes	No
• Build a safe environment where teachers will feel free to talk.	Yes	No
• Recognize deficit thinking/beliefs.	Yes	No
• Challenge without humiliation and deconstruct and reframe deficit beliefs.	Yes	No
• Know who and when to challenge and when to withdraw.	Yes	No
• Remain emotionally neutral in the midst of conflict.	Yes	No

• Avoid getting hooked when others challenge you (e.g. if you're white, teachers accuse you of being a racist. Or, if you're a person of color, you're told "it's your issue"); don't take remarks/messages personally. This skill is especially difficult to practice if you identify with the group being labeled as deficit (e.g. person of color and/or grew up in poverty).	**Yes**	**No**
• Identify and resolve culture clashes.	**Yes**	**No**
• Work with a partner to plan and train.	**Yes**	**No**
• Admit you make mistakes.	**Yes**	**No**
• Culture switch.	**Yes**	**No**

You have CONVICTION that:

• Each child can learn and succeed.	**Yes**	**No**
• Learning should be student-centered.	**Yes**	**No**
• Schooling should be driven by what is best for students, families, and communities.	**Yes**	**No**
• Educators are well-intentioned, caring individuals.	**Yes**	**No**
• There is no one "right" way to do things.	**Yes**	**No**
• School reform requires change in both beliefs and practice.	**Yes**	**No**
• Culturally responsive teaching benefits all students and educators.	**Yes**	**No**
• Multicultural understanding is important for all students, not just diverse students.	**Yes**	**No**
• You can persevere — you will stick with the process even when it gets difficult	**Yes**	**No**

The results:

- If you answered "yes" to all of the questions listed in this tool, then you are the one to lead this journey.

- If you answered "yes" to all of the questions under the Conviction category but were not able to answer "yes" to most of the others under the categories of Knowledge and Skills, then get more diversity training before volunteering to lead this journey.

- If you answered "no" to most of the questions on this assessment tool, especially those in the Conviction category, then look for someone in your organization who can best help your staff develop cultural proficiency. Even if you are willing and capable of leading the effort, other commitments may prevent you from giving your attention to it, in which case you must identify someone who can.

For more information
See Sarah W. Nelson and Patricia L. Guerra's column, Cultural Proficiency, on p. 59.

If not me, who?

Canvass your district to find someone who has the knowledge, skills, and conviction to lead this effort. If there is no one, you can take one of three actions:

1. Hire professional diversity trainers;
2. Identify a staff member who is willing to take on the role and then develop this individual's knowledge and skills; or
3. Implement a two-tiered staff development program that splits responsibility between trainers. The two-tiered approach starts with a depersonalized exploration of the issues to develop a readiness and desire to learn more about diversity, followed by intensive training to delve deeper into personal beliefs and professional practice. The first step can be led by you or another staff member who has some cultural awareness and knowledge and is willing to lead teachers in a discussion.

Source: Guerra, P.L. & Nelson, S.W. (2006, April). *Leadership for diverse schools: Putting tough issues on the table.* Session presented at the annual meeting of the ASCD, Chicago, IL. ■

SCHOOLS THAT BEAT THE ODDS DON'T BACK AWAY FROM A CHALLENGE

When veteran education writer Karin Chenoweth set out to explore schools that succeeded against the odds, she was especially surprised by one discovery.

"I knew I would find schools that had beaten the odds. But I worried about the cost in terms of the lives and the health of the teachers and principals. Would they be bitter, overworked, and just tired because of all of the effort?" she wondered.

Instead, she found just the opposite.

"These guys are pumping! They are so energetic and invigorated. They work very hard, but they are successful and that drives them to be more successful," she said.

Chenoweth found great respect and caring in each of the schools she documents in *It's Being Done* (Harvard Education Press, 2007), a collection of 15 stories about academic success in schools that serve large populations of children of color and those who live in poverty. "These schools are very respectful places. The principals are respectful of the teachers. The teachers are respectful of the students. The staff is respectful of the parents. The culture is very nice. They are very pleasant places to be," she said.

"You know what it's like to be in a dysfunctional school. There are a lot of angry people. It's very dispiriting and tiring. These are not angry schools," she said.

Chenoweth has been in high-poverty schools that don't succeed with kids but try to help the teachers be happy by accommodating their wants. "If you want to make schools nice for grown-ups, then you let the grown-ups do whatever they want to do. But that isn't going to make them successful," she said.

The *It's Being Done* schools are different because they do not base decisions on what would make adults happy. They do what is best for students. "Once you put the decision-making locus on what is good for kids, it's going to be uncomfortable for the grown-ups. But when they see what a difference it makes, then they become very nice places to work," she said.

Chenoweth acknowledges that she was visiting these schools after they had experienced years of improvement.

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"I think it was uncomfortable for the adults in those buildings in the beginning because change is very difficult. In each case, the adults in there had to learn a lot, and they had to change a lot," she said.

So where exactly did these schools start their journeys toward success?

The key in every case, she said, was looking closely at data about student achievement. They took a snapshot of student learning, which was often painful to view because teachers saw an image of their work that surprised them. Then they began to map their journey. In virtually every case, that meant studying the content standards, determining whether they were teaching to those standards, and then changing their instruction.

Chenoweth tells a remarkable story about the changes at Port Chester Middle School in Port Chester, N.Y., a blue-collar town in tony Westchester County, N.Y. In the mid-1990s, a new principal tackled some of teachers' long-standing complaints about the school. After a time, the school improved. Students were well-behaved. The halls were clean. Teachers were more content and didn't transfer to other buildings.

In each issue of *JSD*, Joan Richardson writes about the relationship between professional learning and student learning. All of her articles and columns can be found at www.nsdc.org.

The principal was so happy about the transformation that he nominated the school for a U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon award. The state of New York recognized the school for its vast improvement in school climate, but the feds scoffed at the notion of recognizing a school with such mediocre academic performance.

During the first year of New York standards-based testing, only a third of Port Chester's student met the standards on the English language arts test and only 38% on the math exam. The numbers were even worse for the school's black and Hispanic students.

The superintendent met with the school's administrators and told them that if the school were a company, he would have shut it down.

"This was greeted with great fury by the teachers. Imagine, they were so confident that they had applied for a Blue Ribbon award! They were astonished by the data," Chenoweth said.

Rather than curl up in a corner, however, the staff embarked on what Chenoweth calls a "journey of intellectual courage." The staff read the state standards and reluctantly acknowledged that they were not teaching what they ought to be teaching. They worked with their curriculum,

and they changed their practice.

By 2005, 68% of Port Chester's students were meeting the state's reading standard and 85% met the math standard. Performance at Port Chester has outpaced the state, including performance by various subgroups.

In 2005, the school once again applied for the Blue Ribbon award. This time, the school got the award.

"They're not perfect. They're not 100% yet. But they're on this trajectory. They've studied the standards. They've studied how to teach. They're definitely on their way," Chenoweth said.

Underlying the improvement at Port Chester and the other schools was a healthy dose of high-quality professional learning. Chenoweth says there is a "data-driven nature to their PD" that eventually enables teachers to "learn to see their children's faces in the data."

Examining the data closely with colleagues transformed these schools, she said. The data provide clear pictures of student results, but it's the discussions about the data that begin to force teachers to open the doors of their practice. "It clarifies what's going on in classrooms in a way that individual observations cannot," she said.

"Individual teachers, if they're really good, have a sense of where each student is in their own classroom. But if they're not good or still lack experience, they don't have that sense. And even really good teachers have no way of looking at what other teachers are doing," she said.

Having more knowledge about which teachers are successful with students and which are not also enables the principal to target the professional development. The principal finds ways to allow teachers to tap into Mrs. Jones'

knowledge while also providing more in-depth support for Miss Smith.

Also crucial, she said, is providing time for teachers to work with colleagues virtually every day. "That is an absolute core element of improvement," she said.

Because time for collaboration was packaged with close examination of the data, teachers learned from each other about successful practices. The regular meetings encouraged teachers to build comfort in working together and in being open about both good and bad results.

Chenoweth does not minimize the difficulties encountered by schools with large populations of struggling students. "Nobody goes into any enterprise looking to be unsuccessful. I think teachers get discouraged slowly. Eventually, if they're good, they often just try to focus on saving one or two students a year," she said.

When schools are confronted with damning results, threatened with state takeovers, criticized by the public and the press, retreating is often the easiest route to take. Standing up to the challenge of improving a school demands moral and intellectual courage and an unquenchable willingness to keep moving forward because retreat has become an unacceptable option.

"Sometimes, teachers and principals are so defensive about even the slightest criticism or piece of information that might put them in a bad light. The principals I wrote about in *It's Being Done* don't protect their schools from criticism. They use that criticism to drive improvement and make their schools good enough that they are above most criticism," she said. ■

reviews

READY-TO-USE STRATEGIES MAKE TEXT VALUABLE FOR TEACHING TEAMS

Review by Susan Keiffer-Barone

I read any text on teaching teams with nostalgia. I began my career in 1984 on a strong 7th-grade team in Irvington-on-Hudson (N.Y.). We met every Monday morning to coordinate our plans for the week and discuss how to help students learn.

Keiffer-Barone

As a beginning teacher, I found the support and wisdom of my colleagues invaluable. My belief in teaming grew in Cincinnati in the '90s. We met daily to discuss strategies and design curricula that pulled our subject areas together into meaningful thematic units. One of my fondest memories of teaching was watching 100 9th-grade students in our cafeteria working on science fair projects with their English, science, social studies, and math teachers.

We certainly could have used *Teacher Teams That Get Results* to enhance our work. Gayle Gregory and Lin Kuzmich provide clear guidance to help teachers create and enhance professional learning communities. And when teachers learn and work together, student collaboration and inquiry improve. I especially like how each of the author's 61 strategies includes purpose, process, examples, and a reproducible chart to use with colleagues. Gregory and Kuzmich know teachers and teaching. They have produced a ready-to-use text that all educators can use at their next team meeting.

The text begins with a brief review of what we know about adult learning and group development. Then the authors launch into strategies to create successful teams. The strategies fall into four key areas:

- Creating a growth-oriented climate;
- Sharing knowledge and skills;
- Building resilience and creating solutions; and
- Determining priorities and creating excellence.

The book suggests creating a positive climate by developing a sense of team and celebrating successes. In the knowledge section, the authors present methods to expand the teaching tool kit. While seasoned staff developers will be familiar with many of these strategies, it is worth the price of the book to have ready-made handouts for techniques such as Four Corners, Jigsaw, KWL, and Pluses & Wishes. (And if you don't know these, definitely buy the book!).

My favorite strategy is #42, Musical Chairs. This strategy appears in the resilience section and pushes every member of a team to converse and to move. In musical chairs, two lines face one another. At each musical break, those in the first line move down one space to face a new partner. This facilitates shared expertise and allows everyone to talk. And it even worked with my 10th graders when they discussed character development in Julius Caesar.

In the last section of this book, on determining priorities, the techniques are less flashy but more effective. The strategies target student results and contain more charting activities to focus the team on what teachers must do to enhance student learning. Examples include the use of SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) to solve problems, Think Abouts, and Data Chats, which center on student needs and what we can do to meet them.

I do have minor complaints. Some of the research is a little dated, and the overview of learning would benefit from more recent work. However, a more relevant gap in the text is the minuscule space allotted to the argument that professional learning teams get results — or how they do it. Why should we work in teams? Working in teams takes a lot more time (and my headmaster would note it costs more money) than working in isolation. Gregory and Kuzmich list 14 benefits of teaming and cite one study. As this is a book of strategies for teaming, a chapter might have been devoted to why we should consider the book's topic at all. This fine book will not help me convince my headmaster to embrace teaming as a method to help students learn or to "get results," as the title implies. And I think he wants to be convinced.

Nonetheless, I recommend this text as an excellent resource for staff developers working with teaching teams. The book provides creative and ready-to-use strategies to enhance team meetings and grow a sense of community among teachers who work together.

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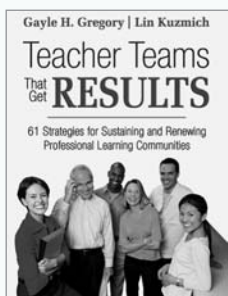
Teacher Teams That Get Results
By Gayle H. Gregory and Lin Kuzmich
2007, Corwin Press
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Web: www.corwinpress.com

Reviewer's rating: 3 out of 4

EASY-TO-READ RESOURCE FOR PRINCIPALS IS MISSING KEY ELEMENTS

Review by Kenneth C. Williams

Williams

Imagine with me if you will … and visualize your dream car. Mine is a steel blue 1961 Lincoln Continental convertible, fully restored and in immaculate condition. Now imagine someone handing you the keys to your dream car. You get in, get buckled, and get ready to go. You check the mirrors, turn the key, and — nothing. You open the hood and find the engine is missing. You have a beautiful car with wonderful parts, but no engine to bring it together and make it go.

That is how I felt after reading Jeffrey Glanz's *What Every Principal Should Know About Instructional Leadership.* The book, one of seven in the "What Every Principal Should Know About Leadership" series, is designed as a ready reference for principals in their efforts to make instructional leadership their first priority. Glanz makes clear that the book is not meant to represent all the reader will need to know as a principal. He says his goal is to gather and present in an easy-to-read manner the essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to get started in the principalship. While I appreciate the inability to cover everything in a single volume, the book misses the engine that drives sustained school improvement.

Glanz begins with the evolution of the principalship from 15 years ago, when principals were largely responsible for ensuring a safe school building, managing bus schedules, enforcing district policies, dealing with parents, and other logistical tasks, to today's age of school improvement. Principals now are responsible for providing top-quality instructional leadership that promotes best practices in teaching.

Current and overwhelming research supports school leaders working to create purposeful collaboration among teams of teachers for professional learning — the engine that drives school improvement. So much of what Glanz identifies as best practices is born out of the work of the collaborative team. Yet his approach is about working with the teacher as an individual. While there is a definite place for that approach, the goal of learning for all students can be accomplished only when principals, as instructional leaders, provide teachers with the time, support, expectations, and structures for purposeful collaboration. Collaborative teams, according to DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many (*Learning by Doing,* Solution Tree, 2006), are expected to work interdependently to:

- Develop and pursue results-oriented goals that are aligned to school and district goals;
- Identify and agree on what students are expected to know and be able to do;
- Analyze common data in an effort to identify concerns regarding student learning and teacher instruction;
- Work together on how to best address learning concerns; and
- Assess results and begin the cycle all again.

Through this learning communities approach, many of the practices that Glanz identifies are addressed. The difference is that when addressed through collaborative teams, results often are compounded because of the combined talents and synergy of a group of teachers working with aligned goals, objectives, and data.

Glanz divides the book into three distinct areas: facilitating best practices in teaching, in curriculum, and in supervision and professional development. For each area, the author offers his view, research, and examples to support why they are integral best practices in teaching and important for principals to know. He presents ideas concisely for quick reference. Each chapter begins with a box summarizing the ideas presented in the chapter and offering a few reflective questions to encourage deeper thinking on the topic.

As a reference for specific areas and components of leadership, this book is a useful and easy-to-read resource for principals. As a stand-alone resource for instructional leadership, the book falls short in not emphasizing the principal's critical role in developing and facilitating the work of teachers in collaborative teams. While Glanz again and again offers the disclaimer that each chapter will not cover every bit of information there is to know about a given topic, he misses the collaborative team as the engine for school improvement.

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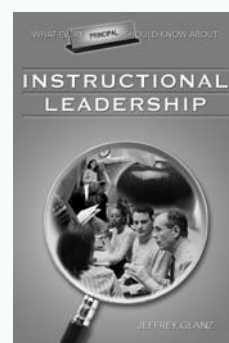
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Reviewer's rating: 2.5 out of 4

ELMORE DIGS DEEP
TO UNDERSTAND THE CHALLENGES
OF SCHOOL REFORM

Review by Francis M. Duffy

Richard Elmore has contributed much to our understanding of why and how school reform succeeds or fails. This book adds depth and breadth to that knowledge.

The book is a collection of seven essays written by Elmore, a Harvard University professor of education. Each focuses on an important aspect of school reform. In these essays, he meticulously guides readers through his analysis of various difficulties that educators face when working to improve schooling in their districts, and he provides a historical context for understanding those difficulties. For example, in the first essay he writes in depth about the challenges of scaling up classroom-focused or school building-focused improvements to create and sustain systemwide improvement. His assessment of these efforts, however, leaves the reader with little hope that such large-scale changes will succeed unless change leaders in school districts apply principles of systemic change that inform them about how their districts perform as systems and about how to improve them as systems. I enthusiastically concur with his assessment.

One problem I encountered while reading his book is the density of his prose. Elmore packs a lot of conceptual complexity onto his pages, and that density requires slow reading — sometimes a second or third reading of sentences. The essays also are quite academic and better suited to those with a scholarly interest in making school reform more effective. I didn't find much in the essays for staff development specialists.

However, for readers deeply interested in a thorough analysis of the failures and successes of school reform, or those especially interested in the historical foundation of school reform, I highly recommend this book. For me, with a strong interest in whole-system reform, I value Elmore's book and his analyses.

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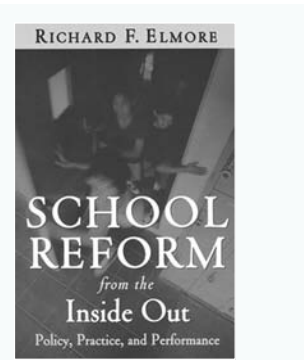
theme/THE HIGH SCHOOL

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

forum / ELAINE DUFF

IF WE'RE DETERMINED, WE CAN CONNECT WITH EVERY STUDENT

"When students cannot learn the way we teach them, we must teach them the way they learn." — Howard Gardner

Teachers often can fall into the trap of teaching content instead of children. Many of us have the attitude that "we will put the information out there, and if they don't get it, it's on them."

Several years ago, I had a student named Jeremy in 12th-grade English, in which the curriculum centered on writing and British literature. I struggled to find ways to make the content interesting — I used lots of cooperative learning, visuals, and let the students have lots of choices. Jeremy didn't care. Though Jeremy was classified as gifted, he slept in class every day. I began to get really frustrated because I couldn't pique Jeremy's interest. I even began to resent him for not liking my class. Everyone else liked my class — what was wrong with Jeremy?

Elaine Duff

High school teachers sometimes develop a hands-off attitude. I thought, "OK, Jeremy, if you want to fail my class, fine. I've tried everything." As time went on, I ignored Jeremy. I didn't ask him questions, or even make eye contact with him. I didn't expect anything from him, except snoring and an occasional puddle of drool left on his desk.

By accident, I found that Jeremy was capable of much more. One day, I went to the broadcasting classroom to edit film of Homecoming Week for a montage. The broadcasting teacher had helped me learn how to edit video and let me use her machine in the studio whenever I wanted. On this day, several students were working on an assignment. I was not paying much attention, but then I heard a voice I recognized. I looked up and saw Jeremy,

This diary entry was first published by the Teacher Leaders Network, a program of the Center for Teaching Quality. Browse more diaries at **www.teacherleaders. org/old_site/diaries.html.**

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not only awake, but teaching his classmates.

He was animatedly explaining how to film a fight sequence. My first thought was that Jeremy must have a twin! I sat staring with my mouth agape, struggling to reconcile the Jeremy I knew with this stranger. Suddenly he realized I was sitting in the corner by the editing machine.

Our eyes met. "Mrs. Duff?"

"Jeremy?" I said.

He asked with surprise, "You know how to edit video?"

I almost replied, "You're walking upright?" but caught myself. "Yes, Mrs. Bernard taught me. I had no idea you were a videographer!" He beamed with pride and explained the project his group was working on. It was clear he had earned his classmates' respect. And it was suddenly clear to me that I had not really made an effort to know Jeremy at all.

What happened next was amazing. In class, Jeremy not only stayed awake, he completed his work and participated in discussions. He volunteered to film class projects and completed one himself. He passed my class with a B.

What happened? When Jeremy encountered me outside English class, it changed his perspective of me. He realized I wasn't just some weird lady trying to force him to learn British poetry. Equally important, my perspective about him was altered. He wasn't just the kid who slept in my class.

I'm not proud that I didn't make a better effort to know Jeremy before the encounter in the broadcast room. I told myself I had tried everything, but I had not stepped outside of my little English world at all.

I learned from that fortunate accident. Now I make a great effort to cause more of these "accidents" to happen. I try harder to discover my students' many facets. And I am happy to report that Jeremy now works for a television station.

I know now that we must be willing to entertain the idea that not all students will learn the same way or at the same rate, nor will every student respond every time. We must be willing to keep trying to reach every student. In the end, it's all about attitude. It may be a teaching strategy, a timely smile, or a fortunate accident. But if we're determined to reach our kids, we'll eventually find a way. ■