

THE SWEET SPOT IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING:

When student learning goals and educator performance standards align, everything is possible.

By Joellen Killion and Jacqueline Kennedy

When student content standards and educator performance standards intersect and are surrounded with accountability and support systems that create the conditions for high degrees of educator and student learning, a sweet spot emerges for professional learning. In this sweet spot, educators have the best leverage for making the most important decisions about professional learning: its content and outcomes.

WHAT'S BEST FOR OUR STUDENTS?

Outcomes are the driving force at one high-achieving elementary school.

By Cathy Kinzer and Laura Taft

Teachers at Monte Vista Elementary School in Las Cruces, N.M., are developing knowledge and skills for effective teaching through collegial classroom experiences, using multiple sources of data to inform their decisions, and studying teaching and the outcomes of these efforts on student learning and achievement. Focusing on a culture of collaboration and outcome-based student data, the school has achieved high scores on statewide assessments for students in all subgroups.

PARTNERSHIP PAVES THE WAY TO COLLEGE SUCCESS:

High school and college math teachers collaborate to improve instruction.

By Janet Hart Frost, Jacqueline Coomes, and Kristine Lindeblad

High school and college math educators in Spokane, Wash., have joined forces to change attitudes and teaching approaches at both levels. The Riverpoint Advanced Mathematics Partnership project has led to instructional changes, departmental collaboration, and teacher leadership. These changes are helping students develop the characteristics and skills they need to succeed in college.

CREATING SYNERGY:

Cycle of inquiry shifts learning teams into high gear.

By Karl H. Clauset and Carlene U. Murphy

Whole-Faculty Study Groups use sharing, learning, and collaboration to transform schools into learning communities focused on strengthening educator practice and improving student outcomes. The authors reconnect with schools and districts across the country that have incorporated the Whole-Faculty Study Groups design to find out how it has changed their culture.

AN OUTCOMES PIONEER:

Science educator is a passionate advocate for instilling a true sense of inquiry throughout education.

Q&A WITH ROBERT YAGER.

By Tracy Crow

Robert Yager's work with science educators has long emphasized the importance of examining the student outcomes that result from teacher professional learning. Yager, professor of science education at the University of Iowa, talks about what makes professional learning effective in science, how to develop a creative mindset in teachers and students, and how to loosen up teachers who seem set in their ways.

LASTING LEGACY FOR ACHIEVEMENT:

Colorado coaches boost teacher effectiveness with a rubric for professional learning.

By Jean Cross

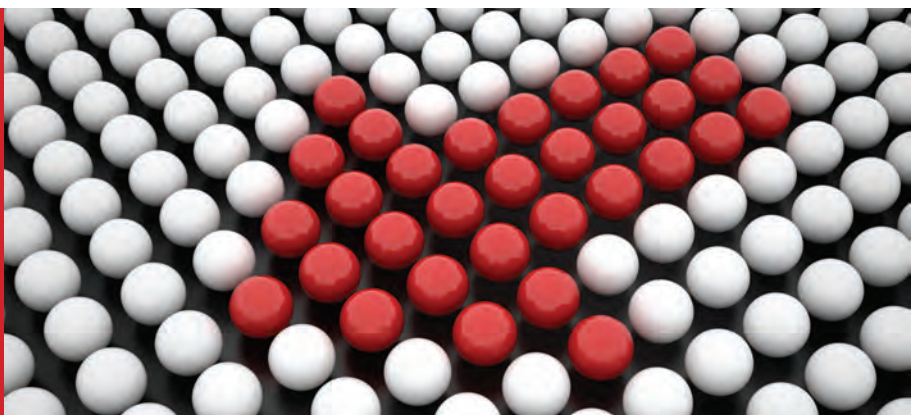
The Weld County School District Re-8 in Fort Lupton, Colo., was eager to increase teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Working in professional learning communities, coaches gained expertise in teaching skills and adult learning, teachers gained flexible learning formats, and the district gained a rubric that will sustain high-quality professional learning.

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features

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

WRESTLING WITH DATA:

Learning network grapples with how to gather and analyze valuable information.

By Harriette Thurber Rasmussen

A facilitator documents the struggles and triumphs as a network of principals and teachers seeks to analyze and understand the learning process in a way that will increase their capacity to lead instructional improvement. The process has turned the group’s notion of data and how to use it upside down and has begun to shift a privatized culture into one that values collaborative practice.

TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION:

Learning walk brings districts together to examine teacher evaluation and support roles.

By Anthony Armstrong

Memphis (Tenn.) City Schools sought to align its existing professional development with newly created teacher effectiveness measures, but district leaders knew they couldn’t do it alone. Using a site visit protocol, a team from Memphis met with a team from Hillsborough County (Fla.) Public Schools, a district that had successfully navigated challenges similar to its own, to talk, observe, and develop behind-the-scenes insights.

STAGES OF TEACHING

BOOMERS AND MILLENNIALS — VIVE LA DIFFÉRENCE:

How to mesh generational styles in a learning community.

By Suzette Lovely

The generation gap between baby boomers and millennials is wide — different values, different expectations, different working styles. So how can learning communities made up of several generations become collaborative? Forget the stereotypes, let others speak their minds, show respect, make professional development relevant, and don’t overload novice teachers.

INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

Corwin Press.....	27, inside back cover
John Wiley/Jossey-Bass.....	15
Just ASK Publications & Professional Development.....	45, outside back cover
Pearson	29
Random House.....	21
School Improvement Network.....	1
Solution Tree.....	inside front cover
Sopris Learning	42
Texas Instruments.....	13
Union Institute and University.....	23

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- Please send manuscripts and questions to Christy Colclasure (christy.colclasure@learningforward.org).
- Notes to assist authors in preparing a manuscript are at www.learningforward.org/publications/jsd/writers-guidelines.

columns

Collaborative culture:

Beliefs, aspirations, and perspectives are as diverse as the colors on a painter’s palette.

By Susan Scott

A two-part activity shows how to build collaboration by leveraging our differences toward common goals.

Cultural proficiency:

Use lessons in similarities and differences to help students understand diversity.

*By Sarah W. Nelson
and Patricia L. Guerra*

Diversity is the elephant in the classroom, but teachers can use a process to help students understand and value diversity.

From the director:

Student outcomes are the driving force behind professional learning decisions.

By Stephanie Hirsh

The idea that professional learning planning begins with what students need to know and be able to do is so simple, but often neglected.