JSD

Find the sweet spot in professional learning p. 10

Outcomes

Sixth in a series on Learning Forward's standards

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JSD

The
Learning Forward
Journal

theme OUTCOMES

OCTOBER 2012,
VOLUME 33, NO. 5

What seems obvious now started as a revolutionary concept

There are some concepts in education, both old and new, that on their face sound absurd to the uninitiated. "New math." What, does 2+2 not equal 4 this year? "Whole language instruction." Or should we consider using just half of the language? How about adopting an "inquiry approach"? Presumably, the alternative would be never asking questions in science class. "Brain-based learning" writes its own punch line.

One of the most ridiculous of all would have to be "outcomes-based education." Those in education know that the phrase, like so many, is loaded with all kinds of meanings and associations, both benign and controversial. The expression itself, however, raises a host of naïve questions. When was it groundbreaking to expect education to have outcomes? What is the purpose of schools if we don't have expectations for some kind of results, even if they aren't defined by accountability measures or standards?

And yet, in professional learning as in education as a whole, looking at learning outcomes rather than teaching inputs was not always a widespread

Hayes Mizell's message was forceful.

•

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

perspective. When NSDC (now Learning Forward), with support from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, began the Results-Based Staff Development Initiative in 1997, programs that tied professional development to student outcomes were not easy to identify. Learning Forward Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh remembers how nervous she was when Hayes Mizell, now Learning Forward's distinguished senior fellow, first took the stage at the 1997 NSDC Annual Conference, where he delivered a strong message that staff development had to result in improvements for students or it wasn't worth the investment. She wondered whether the board would fire her for allowing such a controversial message.

The Outcomes standard from the 2011 Standards for Professional Learning demonstrates the field's evolution. The standard asks anyone responsible for professional learning to make sure that the learning of adults is guided by the many standards documents that define what students are supposed to know and be able to do. Such documents include the math or science content standards, among others. At the same time, professional learning should take into account standards that outline what educators in various roles should know and be able to do. For educators, this means school leader or teacher leader standards, among others.

Standards documents that fall under the umbrella of the Outcomes standard encompass not only the academic content that students need and the pedagogical knowledge that educators must develop. Outcomes also include the many other elements that play a role in the learning environment, from family involvement to developing a safe and supportive culture in the school.

Explore articles in this issue of *JSD* to learn about schools that consistently make the connection between the learning of adults and the learning of students. Begin with Joellen Killion and Jacqueline Kennedy's article on the standard itself and all it entails (see p. 10). Read about educators who examine exactly what it is that students need to learn and create their own learning agendas accordingly.

As with all of the professional learning standards, the Outcomes standard doesn't work alone, these articles show. Those educators stressing outcomes often find that their best pathways are through learning communities that examine data. At the same time, identifying outcomes isn't sufficient if the evaluation of professional learning indicates that the outcomes weren't achieved.

Every profession develops its own jargon and acronyms to make sense of complex ideas. Probing the meaning of such terms and engaging in dialogue over their value are the actions that move us forward — toward meaningful outcomes. ■

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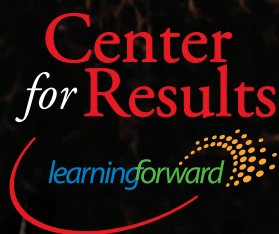
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WHAT WE THINK ABOUT SCHOOLS
2012 PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools
Phi Delta Kappa International, September 2012

Conducted annually, the PDK/Gallup poll tracks public opinion about the public schools. Among this year's findings:

- Closing achievement gaps and improving urban public schools are priorities for most of us — and most of us are willing to pay more taxes to achieve that goal.
- We're divided on whether student test scores should be part of a teacher's evaluation.
- Not many would give A's or B's to the public schools nationally, but most of us have trust and confidence in public school teachers. And most of us believe we know at least one public school teacher "very well."
- Common core standards will make the U.S. more competitive, improve schools in our communities, and provide more consistency between districts within a state and between states. High-quality standards won't hurt our chances of closing achievement gaps.

www.pdkintl.org/poll/index.htm

LEARNING DESIGNS
Professional Learning — Approaches and Design
Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

Frederick Brown

In a videotaped conversation, Frederick Brown, Learning Forward's director of strategy and development, discusses professional learning approaches, learning designs, and social media with Adam Smith, founder and principal consultant of the Equity Institute in Australia. Teachers must take responsibility for their own learning, Brown says. He cites the Learning Forward Academy's learning design as one that allows educators to focus on a specific problem in their school or district and social media as a way for teachers to reach out beyond school walls.
www.newsroom.aitsl.edu.au/videos/professional-learning-%E2%80%93-approaches-and-design

REPORTING ON REFORM
Teacher Effectiveness
The Hechinger Report

Since 2010, The Hechinger Report has been taking an in-depth look at efforts to improve teacher effectiveness. What's the best way to identify a good teacher? Should test scores be used to hire and fire teachers? How is the role of a school principal changing? Are schools improving as a result of the new efforts? Articles tackle these and other critical questions in states that are leading the reforms, including Wisconsin, Florida, Tennessee, and Indiana. In a recent report, Sarah Butrymowicz debates the challenges and benefits of online teacher training and whether it can improve public education.
http://hechingerreport.org/category/special_reports/teacher_effectiveness

BRITAIN'S BEST TEACHERS
Great Teachers: Attracting, Training and Retaining the Best
House of Commons Education Committee, May 2012

The British Parliament explores teacher quality in this report from the House of Commons Education Committee. The committee examined the characteristics that define the best teachers and how to develop policies that will attract those candidates to the profession, train and develop them, and retain them. Recommendations include increased research into the characteristics of effective teaching; developing partnerships with local universities, colleges, and schools; and a formal and flexible career structure for teachers, with different pathways for those who wish to remain classroom teachers or become teaching specialists, linked to pay and conditions and professional development.
http://bit.ly/Qj7cAE

LEARNING STANDARDS
Instructional Supports: The Missing Piece in State Education Standards
The Education Trust, March 2012

The transition from current state learning standards to college- and career-ready standards being rolled out across the nation is more than a subtle shift. The Education Trust's report offers insights about the best ways states can support our nation's educators in their efforts to help students meet high academic standards. Key points:

- Instructional supports guide how academic standards are taught and translated into student learning;
- Teachers want a clear curricular framework, a rich array of teaching resources, and ideas for assignments that tap higher-order thinking; and
- As states implement new standards, they must simultaneously provide teachers with the tools to teach them effectively.

www.edtrust.org/dc/publication/instructional-supports-the-missing-piece-in-state-education-standards

INSIDE COMMON CORE
Common Core Implementation Video Series
Council of Chief State School Officers

These videos were developed to help diverse groups — educators, policymakers, and parents — better understand the breadth and depth of Common Core State Standards and how they will improve teaching, make classrooms better, create shared expectations, and cultivate lifelong learning for all students. The segments are organized into separate mathematics and English language arts sections, and demonstrate critical concepts related to each. Videos can be used to jumpstart conversations about policy goals, orient staff to new classroom demands, assess professional development tools, create instructional materials, and galvanize support for schools.

www.ccsso.org/Resources/Digital_Resources/Common_Core_Implementation_Video_Series.html

CALIFORNIA TEACHERS
Greatness by Design: Supporting Outstanding Teaching to Sustain a Golden State
California Department of Education, September 2012

A report by California's Task Force on Educator Excellence, led by Linda Darling-Hammond and Chris Steinhauser, calls for sweeping improvements in how teachers are recruited, trained, mentored, and evaluated. According to the report, the state needs to develop a diverse, high-quality workforce of teachers and principals, create quality induction programs that can help teachers improve early in their careers, and provide ongoing training and support. The report examines how to provide a career development framework that fosters growth and leadership for teachers throughout their careers and takes a close look at how to improve evaluation, including how to collaborate with teachers and incorporate valid measures of student learning.

www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/ee.asp

CONNECTING THE STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

As the introduction to the Standards for Professional Learning states, "They are the essential elements of professional learning that function in synergy to enable educators to increase their effectiveness and student learning" (Learning Forward, 2011, p. 14).

STANDARDS ➜	Learning Communities	Leadership	Resources
QUESTIONS AND LINKS At right are several questions that explore how the Outcomes standard integrates with the other six standards.	• How are learning communities developing clear outcomes for students and educators? • To what degree do learning community members align the goals of various initiatives with the school, district, state/provincial goals for student achievement? • How do learning community members demonstrate collective responsibility for educator and student outcomes?	• How do leaders model and build capacity to align educator and student learning outcomes? • In what way are leaders, administrators, and teacher leaders purposefully and intentionally building coherence in plans for professional learning? • What strategies do leaders use to strengthen connections among the many professional learning experiences?	• How do outcomes for educators and students influence decisions about professional learning resource allocation? • In what ways do explicit outcomes for educators and students influence how resource use is monitored and evaluated? • To what degree do district and school leaders understand how resource allocation and use influence outcome attainment?

IN THIS ISSUE OF *JSD* THE LEARNING STARTS HERE ▼

If you're interested in …	Start with the article on page …
• EFFECTIVE collaboration	18, 30, 46, 56
• THE USE of data	18, 46
• CONTENT-SPECIFIC professional learning	24, 34
• THE ROLE of coaches	36
• HOW TO SET learning goals	10, 72
• PARTNERING for results	24, 50

OUTCOMES STANDARDS AT A GLANCE

These are excerpts from just a few of the performance and curriculum standards relevant to the Outcomes standard.

InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards

Outlines common principles and foundations of teaching practice in four general categories.

THE LEARNER AND LEARNING
1. Learner development
2. Learning differences
3. Learning environments

CONTENT KNOWLEDGE
4. Content knowledge
5. Application of content

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE
6. Assessment
7. Planning for instruction
8. Instructional strategies

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY
9. Professional learning and ethical practice
10. Leadership and collaboration

http://tinyurl.com/8orv7sc

As *JSD* examines each standard individually, we will also demonstrate the key connections between and among all seven standards.

Data	Learning Designs	Implementation	Outcomes
• How are data about student and educator performance used in determining outcomes for professional learning? • In what ways do decision makers, policymakers, and other stakeholders use defined outcomes to determine the effectiveness of professional learning? • How are educators using benchmarks to assess progress toward the intended outcomes of professional learning?	• In what ways do educator and student outcomes influence decisions about professional learning? • Who selects learning designs for professional learning, and how do they use intended outcomes in the decision-making process? • To what degree do professional learning designs reflect or model educator outcomes?	• How do benchmarks toward the outcomes guide implementation support and feedback? • To what degree does the nature of the outcome (e.g. its complexity, degree of change expected, etc.) influence the type and duration of implementation support? • How do coaches, teacher leaders, principals, and other external assistance providers use the intended outcomes of professional learning to plan ongoing support for implementation?	• In what ways are student content standards used to inform decisions about professional learning? • In what ways are educator effectiveness standards used to inform decisions about professional learning? • How do those responsible for and engaging in professional learning build coherence among professional learning, educator performance, and student content standards?

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

Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008

Organized under six standards, which call for:

1. Setting a widely shared vision for learning;

2. Developing a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth;

3. Ensuring effective management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment;

4. Collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources;

5. Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner; and

6. Understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, legal, and cultural contexts.

http://tinyurl.com/bwmmbtv

Common Core State Standards for Mathematics

Standards for Mathematical Practice describe varieties of expertise that mathematics educators at all levels should seek to develop in their students.

1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.

2. Reason abstractly and quantitatively.

3. Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.

4. Model with mathematics.

5. Use appropriate tools strategically.

6. Attend to precision.

7. Look for and make use of structure.

8. Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.
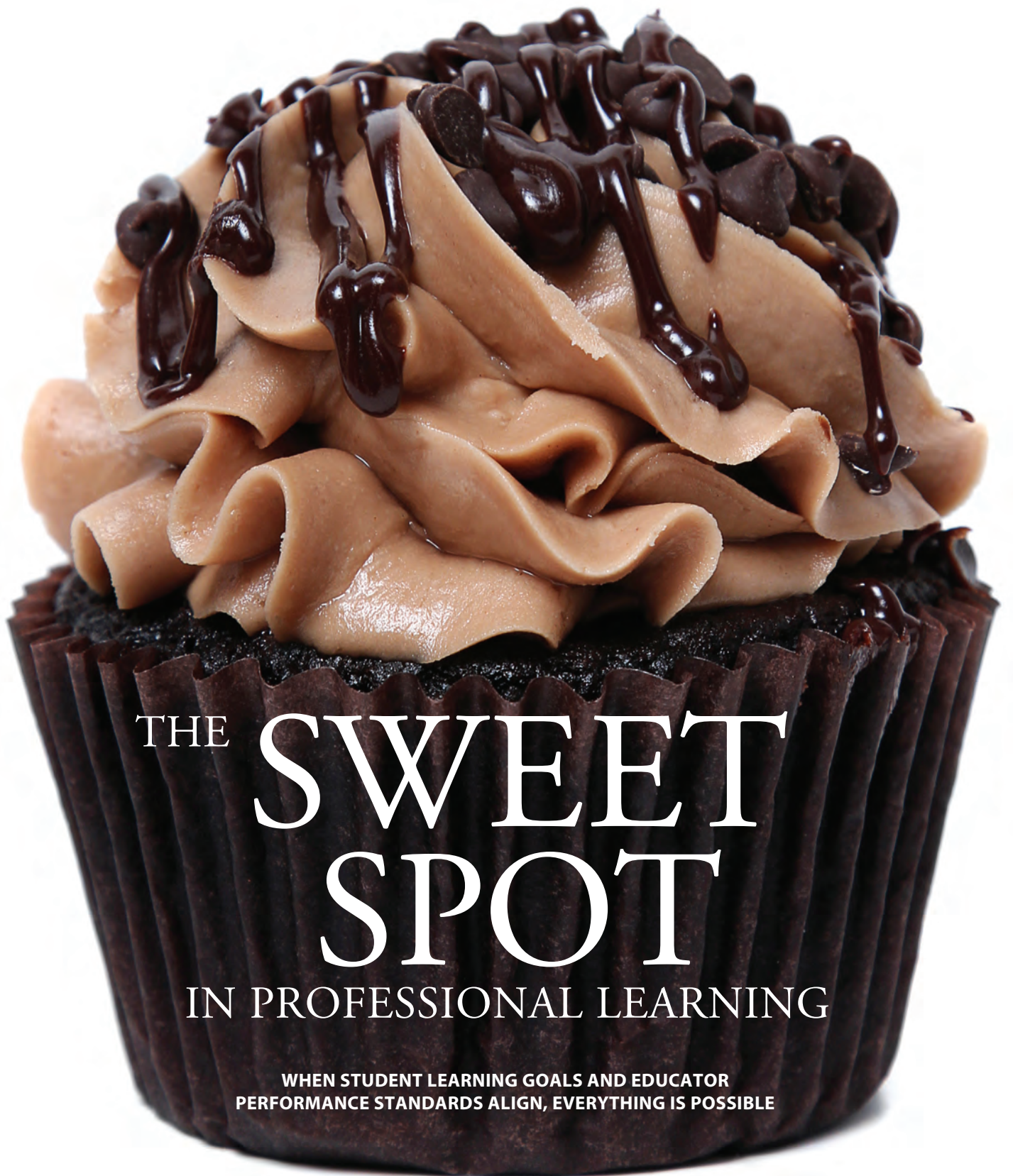
http://tinyurl.com/25pzc5h

THE SWEET SPOT
IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

WHEN STUDENT LEARNING GOALS AND EDUCATOR PERFORMANCE STANDARDS ALIGN, EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE

Outcomes: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

By Joellen Killion and Jacqueline Kennedy

Athletes, musicians, investors, and hopeless romantics search for the sweet spot in their equipment, analysis, or hearts. A sweet spot is a place where a combination of factors comes together to produce the best results with greatest efficiency. William Safire, writing in his On Language column in *The Times Magazine,* says that "the origin of the metaphor is the thickest part of a baseball bat. That may not be subtle enough; more precisely, it is the place somewhere on the 'meat end' of the bat that the batter believes gives him the most power and control of placement. Or it is the place on the ball, just below the center of the sphere, that — when hit squarely to generate the proper amount of backspin — leads to the longest high drive" (Safire, 2007). As school systems around the world are increasing expectations for what students learn and what educators do to support their learning, they must aim for the sweet spot to achieve maximum results for their efforts.

CHANGE ABOUNDS

The pace and scope of change in schools provides many opportunities for missteps, wasted effort, and fragmentation. New standards, new accountability systems, new assessments, and new educator effectiveness systems consume the energy and focus of policymakers and educators. Each of these changes intends to provide each student with better education. By increasing the rigor and complexity of student learning, requiring authentic application of learning, and deepening and narrowing the range of content, educators intend to prepare all students for postsecondary education, careers, and participation in a global world. Educators have integrated into new content standards 21st-century skills such as critical and creative thinking, persistence, and problem-solving and workforce competencies such as communication, collaboration skills, change management, and personal awareness. Introducing new standards requires a change in how student learning experiences are designed to move the standards from a checklist of knowledge acquired to authentic, interdisciplinary applications of interdependent knowledge, skills, and dispositions that demonstrate achievement of the new standards.

Along with new content standards are new assessment systems that will provide both formative and summative measures of student progress. These assessments will make use of technology to provide timely, authentic, and informative data for educators and parents. In addition, there are new performance standards for educators. These standards clarify instructional and leadership expectations for effective educators and serve as the criteria for educator evaluation and professional growth. In the U.S., some states are implementing new accountability systems for student, school, and district performance, and realigning support and monitoring systems to ensure high levels of success for all students regardless of the school they attend.

Examples of educator performance standards	InTASC (Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium) Model Core Teaching Standards	National Standards for Quality Online Teaching	Licensure and certification requirements
ISLLC (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium) Standards for School Leaders	National Professional Standards for Teachers (Australia)	National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers	Performance and appraisal requirements
Teacher Leader Model Standards	The UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education (United Kingdom)	Professional Standards for Secondary Principals (New Zealand)	Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta, Canada)

CREATE CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

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 one of the most important decisions about professional learning: its content and outcomes.

Effective professional learning requires a series of decisions. Among the most important is the content and outcomes of professional learning. Decisions about content and outcomes of professional learning are made based on multiple factors and by a variety of educators. Learning teams decide what they will learn and what they expect as a result of their learning. Individual educators consider their performance goals and current evaluation results to identify what they want to learn to improve performance. District and school leaders examine gaps in student learning to identify what educators need to know and do to fill those gaps.

The sweet spot evolves in the link that occurs among professional learning, educator performance standards, and student content standards. When its content integrates student learning standards and performance standards at the precise level of learning educators need, professional learning has the greatest potential to support educators in changing practices to increase student learning.

Numerous research studies and evidence in practice confirm that relationship between teacher practice and student learning. The Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011) guide educators to shape effective professional learning that meets the intended purpose: helping students perform at high levels (Cohen & Hill, 2000; Desimone, 2009; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Kennedy, 1998). The Outcomes standard states: *Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards* (Learning Forward, 2011). The standard makes explicit three

essential elements: meeting educator performance standards, addressing student learning outcomes, and building coherence.

EDUCATOR PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Educator performance standards typically delineate the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions of highly effective educators. These standards have multiple purposes, including guiding preparation programs, establishing licensing and certification requirements, defining components for induction programs, shaping expectations for workplace practices, and clarifying evaluation indicators.

When identifying what educators need to know and be able to do, performance standards make explicit what educators need to perform at high levels, meet career expectations, and impact student learning. Educators share common attributes with other professionals. Among them is the need and desire to engage in continuous learning to deepen and enrich knowledge, expand skills, refine dispositions, and add practices. Using performance standards to identify educator learning needs allows for professional learning planning that is more meaningful and laser-focused. See table above for examples of educator performance standards.

Collecting and analyzing data about educators' backgrounds, learning preferences, teaching experience, and performance contribute to the development of more specific goals for professional learning. Performance data emerge from a variety of formative and summative processes, including self- and peer assessments, reflection, performance assessments, classroom walk-throughs and observations, and student and parent feedback.

All system and school staff — superintendent, principal, teacher, coach, counselor, and librarian — are held to specific standards that describe effective practice. Although educator performance standards (table above) are role-specific and vary across local, state, provincial, and national school systems and schools, what remains the same is an emphasis on effective practices that result in student learning.

These standards, frequently crafted through years of col-

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TEXAS INSTRUMENTS

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laborative work among professionals, are often overlooked as the core content for professional learning. For teachers, this means that their professional learning may fail to support them to achieve expertise in the sophisticated knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of masterful, professional teachers. These areas include content knowledge; pedagogical content knowledge; respecting and addressing individual backgrounds, language, and academic abilities; differentiating learning to meet the needs of all learners; and general instructional pedagogy. The standards also include effective professional communication; collaborative teamwork; creating a collaborative culture; and garnering parental involvement. Professional learning that uses these standards as the content focus elevates practice by developing educators' capacity to demonstrate the essential attributes of effectiveness. By integrating professional standards into professional learning, educators' capacity to meet performance expectations is elevated and equity in teaching and learning is achieved.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Student learning outcomes define the content knowledge and skills that every student is expected to achieve. These standards, along with performance standards, define the content of professional learning. Essentially, educators are accountable for supporting each student's achievement of the outcomes. This means that educators must have deep understanding of the content area, the curriculum design, sequence, and development, and use content-specific instructional strategies to support student learning. In addition to understanding the complexities of teaching and learning, for example, teachers must understand how to teach math content in ways that model how students will be expected to demonstrate their learning in school and beyond.

Like educator performance standards, student learning outcomes define equitable expectations for all students to achieve at high levels. Deciding on the focus of professional learning begins with analyzing student learning needs in relation to the expected outcomes and clear goals for student achievement. With student learning goals in hand, educators can diagnose learning needs by asking the question: What do educators need to learn to do to support student achievement of their learning goals? The professional learning goal defines what educators need to know and be able to do to support high levels of stu-

dent learning. The core content of professional learning is the intersection of what educators need to learn and do and what students need to learn and do. This process is the Backmapping Model for Planning Results-Based Professional Learning (Killion, 1999; Killion & Roy, 2009). The steps and key questions to consider for each step are outlined in the tool on p. 17. These questions will help educators structure discussions and reflections about each step.

Typically the depth, breadth, and developmental sequence of student learning outcomes can be found explicitly defined in subject and grade of student curriculum based on core academic standards. Periodically, local, state, provincial, and national education agencies adopt, revise and articulate standards, curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments. In doing so, they specify expectations for student learning.

In the United States, most states have adopted new college- and career-ready standards. Adoption of these standards requires an extensive investment in professional learning to move standards into practice. This means that professional learning for all educators must be aligned to student learning outcomes to ensure full implementation of instructional practices and curriculum that ensure all students achieve the new standards. See table below for examples of student content standards.

Research has confirmed that a significant factor in raising academic achievement is the improvement of teachers' instructional capacity in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 1996; McLaughlin, 1993). Best practice also shows that educators who experience frequent, rich learning opportunities teach in more ambitious and effective ways (Rosenholtz, 1989; Wenger, 1998). To support all students in achieving defined learning outcomes, the content of professional learning must be designed to deepen educators' content knowledge, understanding of how students learn in the disciplines, and the instructional methodologies that accelerate student learning in each discipline.

BUILDING COHERENCE

In fiber optic communication, the term "coherence" describes the state in which waves are in phase with one another. This principle is the foundation of light wave transmission. When the waves are out of phase with one another, disruption in signals occurs. In similar fashion, many educators' experiences in professional learning can be considered "noise" or disruption in signals because their learning experiences have been

Examples of student content standards					
Common Core State Standards	National Educational Technology Standards for Students	American School Counselor Association National Standards for Students	State, provincial, and school system student learning competencies and standards	National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools (Finland)	Primary School Curriculum (Singapore)

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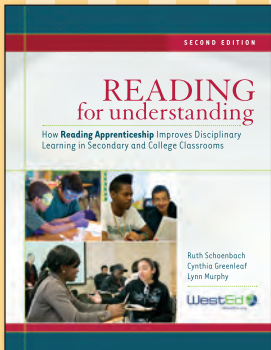
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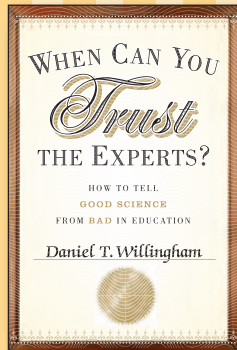
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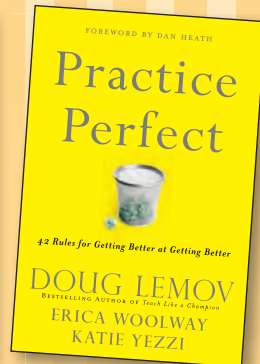
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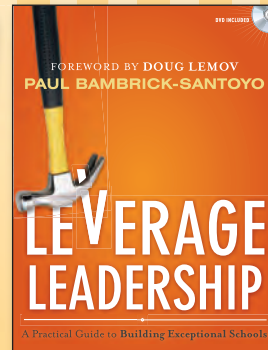
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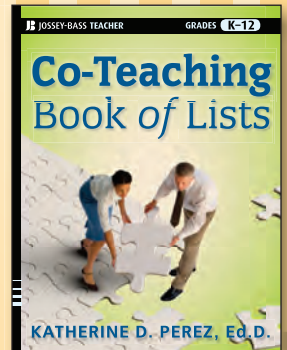
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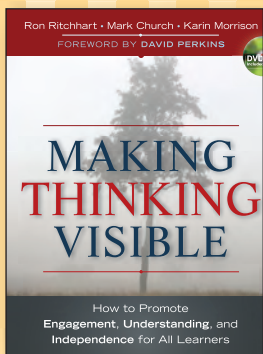
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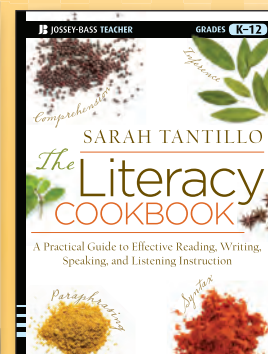
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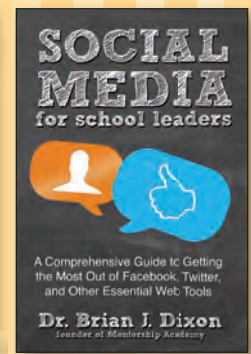
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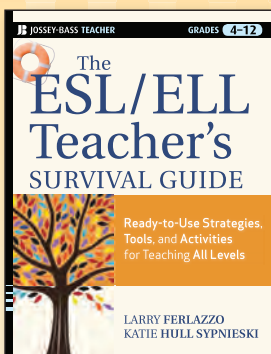
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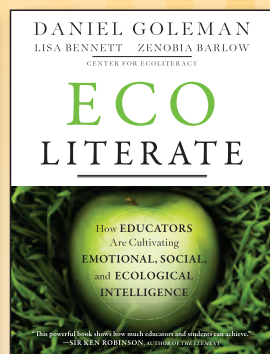
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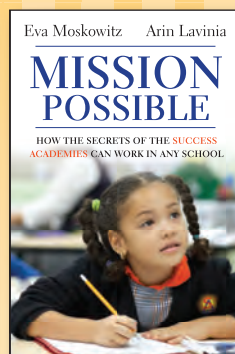
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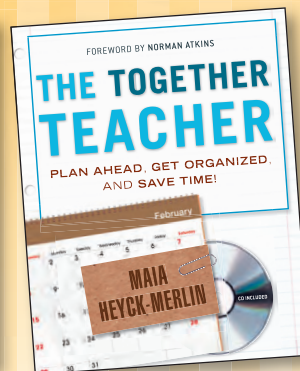
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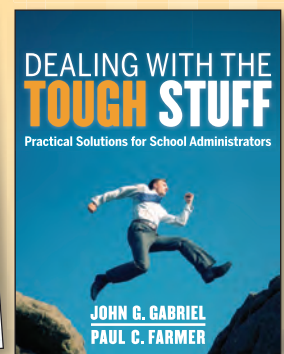
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a collection of random, erratic, and fragmented activities. When there is a direct link among what students need to learn, what educators are expected to do, and the content and process of professional learning, educators appreciate the value of continuous improvement of their practices. When professional learning is leveraged as a systemic strategy, aligned to a comprehensive and coherent plan, it is more likely to be effective in improving educators' knowledge, skills, and practices (Desimone, 2009; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001).

Alignment between educator and student learning builds coherence between the reality of what happens in an educator's daily work and the development of his or her professional practices. It reinforces the belief that educators' instructional and leadership abilities benefit student learning. It also builds on educators' existing knowledge and skills, honors the individual talents they bring to learning experiences, their goals for career and performance development and their responsibility and accountability for reflecting on, refining, and adjusting their practice.

When its content integrates student learning standards and performance standards at the precise level of learning educators need, professional learning has the greatest potential to support educators in changing practices to increase student learning.

Coherence in professional learning occurs when an educator's preparation program meshes seamlessly with career-long development. An educator continually expands the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions first developed in preparation programs through professional learning designed to help educators continue to grow in their content knowledge and pedagogical and leadership practices. A progression of learning eliminates fragmentation and competing priorities and increases the relevance and usefulness of learning. Ongoing, job-embedded professional learning and support for implementation at the individual, team, and school or district level strengthens communities of practice and reinforces collective responsibility and an educator's sense of belonging and moral purpose (Fullan, 2007).

DEEP SUBSTANTIVE LEARNING

From the triangulation of student learning goals, educator performance standards, and professional learning content emerges the sweet spot for both participants in and facilitators of professional learning. Combined, these three aspects create the ultimate sweet spot of professional learning. With a laser-like focus on the sweet spot, professional learning becomes more effective and efficient in promoting deep substantive learning that expands the length of an educator's career. Firmly aligned with expectations defined in performance standards, professional learning generates the highest level of student learning outcomes.

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BACKMAPPING MODEL FOR PLANNING RESULTS-BASED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The Backmapping Model for Planning Results-Based Professional Learning describes a seven-step process for planning professional learning. Use these steps and the key questions to consider for each step to help structure discussions and reflections. Discuss the questions and identify other questions to answer during each step.

Step 1

Analyze student learning needs.

- What do we want students to know and be able to do?
- What knowledge and skills are students missing? Where are the gaps in their learning?
- Which students are most affected?

Step 2

Identify characteristics of community, district, school, department, and staff.

- What are the unique characteristics of this learning community that will influence how to implement successful professional learning?

Step 3

Develop improvement goals and specific student outcomes.

- What are our improvement goals for students, educators, and our school/district?

Step 4

Identify educator learning needs.

- What knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations, and behaviors do educators need to meet the improvement goals?

Step 5

Study the research for specific professional learning programs, strategies, or interventions.

- What are the characteristics of interventions that have successfully achieved our goals?
- Where have they been successful?
- Under what conditions have they worked?

Step 6

Plan intervention, implementation, and evaluation.

- What are our key strategies?
- Who will be responsible for implementing the program?
- What is the timeline for implementation?
- What resources are necessary for success?
- What are the critical benchmarks for progress?
- How will teachers receive coaching and feedback?

Step 7

Implement, sustain, and evaluate the professional development intervention.

- How will we support ongoing implementation?
- What indicators will tell us if we are making appropriate progress?
- What information can we glean from the evaluation to help us make improvements?

Improved student learning

Photo by LAURA TAFT

Teachers at Monte Vista Elementary update and analyze student data tags that are used to track student progress in literacy. From left, Sheila Ortega (4th grade), Jimmy Garcia (4th grade), Tamara Benjamin (special education), Rosemary Medina (4th grade).

WHAT'S BEST
FOR OUR STUDENTS?

OUTCOMES ARE THE DRIVING FORCE AT ONE HIGH-ACHIEVING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

By Cathy Kinzer and Laura Taft

Monte Vista Elementary School is one of 24 K-5 elementary schools in Las Cruces Public Schools, an urban district in southern New Mexico. The school's 450 students reflect the diversity of its Southwestern community: 75% Hispanic, 17% English language learners, and 68% free or reduced lunch, thus qualifying Monte Vista as a Title I school.

Monte Vista opened in August 2010 under the leadership of principal Theresa Jaramillo-Jones with a staff committed to making a difference for the community through a focus on student and professional learning, shared and supportive leadership for all students and teachers, and collaborative professional learning ensuring high achievement for all students.

Since that time, Monte Vista has exemplified Learning Forward's Outcomes standard, which states: *Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards* (Learning Forward,

2011). The school's staff accomplishes this by engaging in purposeful collective learning with shared accountability to each other and to students. Monte Vista's teachers 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.

FOCUS ON CULTURE AND OUTCOMES

In its first year, Monte Vista was one of three elementary schools in the district to make Adequate Yearly Progress in mathematics for all students, as well as all subgroups. In January of its second year, Monte Vista received an A rating as the state converted to a federally approved state system. Monte Vista's score of 82.6% put the school in the top 9% of schools statewide and made it the highest-rated school in its district. After the school's second year of academic testing, Monte Vista again rated an A, scoring 89.4%, the second highest in the state. The school led the district on the rigorous state assessment.

Monte Vista attributes its academic outcomes to two factors: 1) building a professional learning community culture based on collaboration and learning for all — students, families, and staff; and 2) focusing on academic standards and outcome-based student achievement data. By maintaining this focus on culture and outcomes, Monte Vista filters every decision, from scheduling and staff assignments to assemblies and student discipline, around one question: What is best for student learning?

A LEARNING CULTURE

At Monte Vista, educators use professional learning communities to improve their skills, knowledge, and effectiveness as educators for the single purpose of increasing student learning and achievement.

The schedule at Monte Vista is structured so teams of teachers have time during the school day to meet and collaborate. Teams have 4½ hours each week to plan lessons, score common formative assessments, discuss student achievement data, and plan student interventions. By grouping special classes such as library, physical education, music, technology, and art, teacher teams have common planning times to collaborate. As a result, parent requests for specific teachers have disappeared as it becomes apparent that all students have equal access to high-quality, equitable education, with test score variations among individual teachers narrowing.

Monte Vista's culture supports collaboration. As Maricela Rincon, a 3rd-grade teacher, notes, "We are a community of learners who are constantly learning from each other. We take time to observe each other at all grade levels or watch videos of each other's classrooms to learn how we are implementing instructional strategies and how they impact student learning. As professionals, we work together, two grade levels at a time, to discuss certain focus areas in depth with our principal and learning coach."

Ricardo Rincon, a 4th-grade teacher, reports: "We always take time to learn new things that will help us grow as teachers and help us to better meet the needs of our students. We generate knowledge together. Our learning coach puts in a lot of time to research new ideas and helps guide our learning journey. We study together, decide on strategies, implement them in our classrooms with our students, and come back to share our successes with our teams."

This school has a culture of collective trust, high expectations for all — teachers, staff, and students — as well as structures and resources to continue to learn and achieve. Actions taken in the school are strategic and purposeful, with the central goal to improve teaching and leadership practices to support student achievement outcomes. One example of this level of trust and collective commitment can be found in the school's observation process. School administrators, as well as the school's learning coach, conduct classroom walk-throughs around identified area of focus. When the staff was asked whether these focus areas

HOW MONTE VISTA COMPARES TO OTHER SCHOOLS

The table below shows how Monte Vista ranks with other schools that have similar demographics in the student subgroups: English language learners, students with disabilities, ethnicity, economically disadvantaged, and mobility. A composite score incorporates all categories into a general measure of at-risk students.

	SCHOOL RANK (OUT OF 50 SCHOOLS)					
	English language learners	Students with disabilities	Ethnicity	Economically disadvantaged	Mobility	Composite
Current standing	1	7	1	2	3	1
School growth	1	1	1	1	2	1
Student growth, highest 75%	1	1	1	1	1	1
Student growth, lowest 25%	2	1	5	1	2	1
Opportunity to learn	9	3	5	6	8	9

Source: New Mexico Public Education Department.

should be announced ahead of time, the answer was a resounding "No!" The staff agreed that the walk-through data would be more relevant and useful if staff remained unaware of what administrators were looking for on these walk-throughs. These unannounced observation cycles have become a vital source of information for the school in determining areas of strength and areas for improvement.

"As we work together, all participants have a voice and are actively engaged in the learning as well as in the teaching," says Ricardo Rincon. "We all have adopted a philosophy of being active leaders and learners, and we approach learning understanding that our individual input is essential to maintain the diversity of opinion needed to be an effective school. Our voice matters, and we collaborate to move beyond our personal agendas to a shared consensus focused on student learning."

Leadership is not limited to the principal at Monte Vista. Everyone at the school is expected to be a leader: students, families, teachers, and administrators. Structures and processes at the school, such as teacher collaboration, parent involvement, rules for learning and behavior, and shared leadership, are determined by and through the collective wisdom of teachers and students.

Staff- and student-led committees illustrate this shared leadership. Using the school's Educational Plan for Student Success, these committees have ownership and responsibility for meeting school goals. Committees create SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, results-based, and time-bound) to plan assemblies and family nights, make decisions on effec-

tive instruction and methods to monitor it, determine ways to ensure the safety of students on campus, and study student achievement data to look for ways to improve student learning. All committees determine their own agendas, based on the educational plan, distribute meeting minutes to inform staff of decisions made and upcoming events, and monitor their committee's effectiveness.

Students at Monte Vista are expected to take an active role in their own learning outcomes in the classroom. Students maintain their own data notebooks, set their own goals for learning and leading, track progress towards those goals, and celebrate their success at reaching these outcomes. Students use their data notebooks during student-led parent conferences to explain their strengths and areas for improvement as well as set new learning and leading goals.

USING DATA

Using data to improve instruction and student learning is part of the culture at Monte Vista. Monte Vista's teachers recognize that data conversations must go deeper, enabling them to understand student thinking and revise instructional strategies to increase learning. Conversations focus on explicit next action steps to support continued student achievement. Gathering and analyzing data, then using results to determine next steps give Monte Vista's teachers insight into classroom learning and a way to engage in accountability dialogue.

Grade-level teams of teachers use individual student achievement data to create data walls that are used to check on
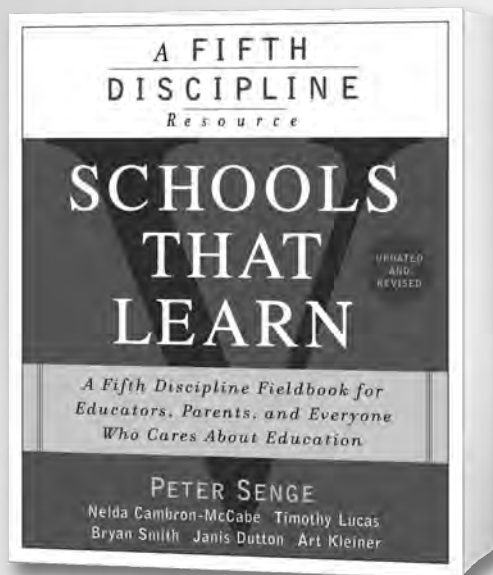
whole-school benchmarks, classroom variances, and individual student growth. By having hands-on time, teachers understand these data and have a buy-in not often found when schools prepare data for the teams.

As part of their professional learning, teachers share student achievement data. Nothing is hidden, and they ask one another tough questions: "Why do you think students scored lower/higher on this standard than in the other two classrooms? What was done differently?" Teachers reflect on their practices and compare student results with those of other teachers. Each classroom has students with unique needs, which provides opportunities to strengthen instruction.

Teachers understand how to make data useful and move it from quantitative or qualitative information to actions within each classroom. "Our learning communities can start with different openings," says Maricela Rincon. "We may present on a topic from our book study, we may watch a video of one of our colleagues integrating innovative strategies during regular instruction, or our learning coach may share results from data collected during classroom walk-through observations."

Administrators and teachers at Monte Vista determine what instructional areas they will observe during classroom walk-throughs based on learning community discussions. Staff may request that classroom walk-through data be collected on areas such as the percentage of teacher talk vs. student talk time, the effectiveness of posted and discussed student objectives, or the implementation of a high-priority schoolwide strategy. Data from these two-week observation cycles is then shared with all staff during learning community meetings.

EVIDENCE OF SUPPORT FOR LEARNING

- Monte Vista has an infrastructure that supports professional and student learning.
- Purposeful, ongoing collaboration is vital and a central priority in the schedule (i.e. when students are attending library, physical education, technology, and literacy/numeracy support).
- Because of the culture of collaboration, teachers see time working together as desirable and essential as professionals sharing their practices.
- Teachers develop grade-level team lesson plans together, and all teachers in a grade level teach using the same lesson plans with the same content standards and student learning objectives on a daily basis. Teams submit one weekly lesson plan together. What they all teach is the same, but how they teach it varies based on individual teacher strengths and styles. However, if one teacher has outstanding results in student learning or high levels of success with a particular style or using a certain resource, this is shared with colleagues because — regardless of personal preferences or styles — everything is based on student learning results.

MONTE VISTA'S CULTURE OF COLLABORATION

- The principal, learning coach, and teachers monitor progress toward shared commitments and academic goals.
- Professional learning uses a variety of data to understand student thinking and then determine next steps.
- Educators are accountable to students and to each other as teachers.
- Studying and sharing practices through a professional learning and teaching cycle connects the learning community to the classroom and provides a process to improve teaching and learning.

The learning communities' central goal is to support student learning. Several sources of data measure progress toward student learning based on the Common Core State Standards. All curriculum and grading at Monte Vista is standards-based. Teams use backward planning, standards, and common formative assessments to plan instruction and measure student learning outcomes. Learning communities analyze evidence of student learning, including assessment data analysis, implementation of evidence-based instructional strategies, and administrative and peer observations to study teaching and determine the support necessary for individual student success.

Teachers study each student's strengths and areas for improvement in their academic and social development, as well as fellow teachers' instructional strengths in order to learn from one another's successes. Ricardo Rincon says, "In today's learning community, we started by analyzing data from one of the classroom walk-through observations, and we were pleased to see that 100% of the staff had been implementing comprehensible input techniques through the month of January. Comprehensible input has been our current subject of study during our schoolwide online course to support English language learners."

ALIGNMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Professionals hold one another accountable for developing teaching expertise that supports student learning. Consistent structures with dedicated times for collaborative professional study are critical to improve teaching. At Monte Vista, teachers study, refine, rehearse, and develop practices to further student learning. "We work together as grade-level professionals to use backward planning for upcoming literacy and numeracy units," says Maricela Rincon. "This work includes a study of our standards, learning objectives, and creating assessments. This helps us to collaboratively develop our common weekly lesson plans."

Kindergarten teacher Melissa Gilbert says, "We also review, compile, and reflect on student data. We bring our common

formative assessments to analyze student thinking and score them together to clear up any confusion and make sure we are consistent as a team and compile our grade-level results to think about the next steps for our students. We have crucial conversations about the student learning that has taken place or in what areas the learning was weak and needs improvement. We can then share strategies we have used that have proven to be successful in our classrooms with our peers.

"Videos of our classrooms or peer observations provide avenues for studying our teaching. The focus is on how our instruction supported learning, not on us as individuals, but on our instructional strategies in relation to student learning," Gilbert says. "We study and improve our teaching. We are learning how to learn together as professionals, and our focus on instruction can make a difference for our students. We share collective responsibility for our students and collaboratively reshape the learning opportunities to meet our students' needs."

One of the outcomes of collaboration is belief in continuous improvement through collective responsibility and learning how to meet student learning needs. Monte Vista's staff members share successes and areas to be strengthened so they can learn from one another how to improve student learning.

Every example of individual strength and teaching style is seen as action research. The improvement process is based on finding individual examples of success in classrooms. Teachers share and study these examples of success to build the professional knowledge needed to support student learning.

At Monte Vista, teachers and administrators are learners along with their students. The school makes purposeful changes based on student results, using a variety of data to improve teacher practice and support student learning. By aligning its changes in teacher practice to student learning needs, the school is using professional learning to focus on outcomes that make a difference for all students.

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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

When high school and college mathematics teachers talk about students' difficulties in college math courses, the conversation often turns to blame: "It's your fault kids aren't coming prepared. You are watering down the curriculum." "You're not teaching them the right way." The conversation rarely turns to ways to improve student success. In Spokane, Wash., high school and college math educators have joined forces to change attitudes and teaching approaches at both levels. These changes are helping students develop the characteristics and skills they need to succeed in college.

The issue that prompted this collaboration is common across the United States. When students take college math placement tests, their scores often place them in remedial math courses that do not earn college credit. The lower students place, the less likely they are to pass these courses. In Spokane community colleges, almost half are placed in these remedial courses, and only 30% of these students earn a passing grade. If they cannot pass these courses, their options for college degrees and careers are limited.

Although earlier attempts at cross-sector collaborations in Spokane and elsewhere in Washington failed, the Riverpoint Partnership for Math and Science has succeeded. Formed in 2007, the Riverpoint Partnership for Math and Science is a group of Spokane K-12 and college administrators who came together to use their combined resources and knowledge to focus on improving student learning. With a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the group launched the Riverpoint Advanced Mathematics Partnership project to provide professional development for high school and college math faculty. The authors of this article served as the project's planners and facilitators. Here is an overview of the project's structures and outcomes, including the context, processes, and support systems that were used to support mutual trust and respect, collaboration, and learning.

KEY STRUCTURES

The project's key structures include a cross-sector learning community, common standards, an array of topics and activities related to math education (including common assessments of student work), classroom observations, and what we have labeled "little changes." All of these structures were couched within a project designed to be responsive to participants' needs and reactions.

Cross-sector learning community. The project is organized so that participants are part of the full learning community as well as smaller learning teams. Each team is

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RIVERPOINT ADVANCED MATHEMATICS PARTNERSHIP PARTICIPANTS

Cohort I:

- 24 secondary participants (1 private and 7 public high schools, 2 urban/suburban school districts).
- 8 postsecondary participants (2 community colleges, 1 university).

Cohort II:

- 18 secondary participants (8 public high schools, 4 suburban/rural school districts).
- 6 postsecondary participants (1 community college, 2 universities).

Educators tackle math topics at the 2009 summer institute of the Riverpoint Advanced Mathematics Partnership. From left: Tom Skok, Jenkins High School, Chewelah, Wash.; Ruth Brocklebank, Ferris High School, Spokane, Wash.; and Ryan Seidel, East Valley High School, Spokane Valley, Wash.

> **As they made changes, many participants observed that students were showing more evidence of college-ready attributes such as increased perseverance, engagement, and responsibility for learning.**

made up of high school teachers from one or two schools and one college faculty member. The community meets for five workshops each year, and teams have assignments to complete between these workshops. For example, teams conduct formative assessments of student work on common tasks and design and teach lessons together.

Teams begin by learning about each other's context and teaching approaches, and then work together in and outside of the workshops. When we observed tensions on some teams between high school and college participants, we introduced norms of collaboration (Garmston & Wellman, 2009) that focused on active listening and understanding that all members had positive intents for their work together. Because teams were doing math problems in workshops as part of their content knowledge development, they also developed norms for problem solving. For example, everyone agreed to show mutual respect for each

other rather than being unintentional "math bullies" who interrupted others. In addition, we conducted frequent discussions of team assignments, readings, ideas, and challenges with the entire group.

In this larger group, we acknowledged participants' expertise and our collective responsibility for learning and developing methods of instruction that would address student learning. When individuals or teams experienced difficulty completing project work, they were asked to determine what roadblocks stood in their way and share strategies for working around these roadblocks.

Common standards. Throughout the project, participants worked with the College Readiness Mathematics Standards (Transition Mathematics Project, 2004), which were created by a statewide consortium of high school and college math educators. These standards include more than math content and processes. They also describe student attributes needed for college success, such as perseverance, attention to detail, intellectual engagement, and responsi-

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bility for learning. Many participants came to believe that these attributes were the most important standards and used them as a focal point of their work in the project.

Array of topics and activities. In addition to the standards and assessments of student work on common tasks mentioned above, participants studied an array of topics such as student engagement, levels of questioning and cognitive demand, math-specific topics (e.g. math content for teaching, proofs, multiple representations), and curricular balance of problem solving, conceptual development, and procedural skill development. Teams shared the results of their assignments, and the group discussed each other's ideas for rich lessons and ways to address the common student errors discovered. As participants gained confidence about sharing ideas and concerns about their teaching, they conducted lesson studies in which one teammate taught a lesson to his or her class, observed by the rest of the team. After the lesson, the team met to critique the lesson, analyze student response, and revise it for another teammate to teach. College faculty were invited to participate in their high school teammates' lesson studies, but a few also conducted their own lesson studies.

Participants who were uncomfortable at the start sharing their ideas about teaching found these lesson studies invigorating and wanted more opportunities to do them. For example, in project evaluations, participants were asked what they might have liked to see done differently, and one responded, "First [year], lesson planning; second, lesson studies; third, more lesson study."

Classroom observations. Three times a year, we visited each high school to observe lessons taught by participating teachers. Individual and team meetings followed these observations. In individual meetings, we discussed lesson characteristics, such as levels of questions, learning targets, and student response. Team meetings focused on team assignments and collaboration. Due to restrictions in the grant, college faculty were not observed as often, but we observed and met with each faculty member at least once during the project, and they were encouraged to attend observations of their high school teammates.

Little changes. Despite their enthusiasm for the project, many participants were slow to try changes in their instructional approach. Habits, colleagues, textbooks, and concerns about time and student response got in the way of trying something new. To remedy this, we asked participants at every workshop to select a "little change" that they would try before the next workshop, with a promise to report the change and the results to the group. We called these changes "little" as a way of acknowledging that major changes were too overwhelming for most people, even when they could understand the reasons for making them. It was also important to allow each person to choose the nature of the change so that it would be comfortable for him or her and aligned with school and classroom priorities. At subsequent workshops, participants reported on these changes, and many chose to adopt ideas they heard from their peers. As participants made changes, students' responses often helped them develop new ideas about their class. For example, Shelley Wogman, an algebra instructor at Spokane (Wash.) Community College, asked students to talk to each other about their homework at the beginning of class, rather than doing her own presentation of all the problems. As a result, students became more actively engaged throughout the class sessions, and she learned to value that engagement, despite her initial discomfort with the additional noise and energy in her classroom.

OUTCOMES FOR PARTICIPANTS AND STUDENTS

As a result of the project, we observed instructional changes such as using more student-centered lessons, emphasizing higher levels of questions and student reasoning, and concentrating more on learning targets, including student attributes, in lessons. College faculty made efforts to connect their classes to students' high school experiences, balanced the levels of questions on their exams, and used more small-group work and inquiry in their courses. Some initiated departmental collaboration at their schools, and several took on new leadership roles there.

A few teachers demonstrated little meaningful or enduring change. However, most of those teachers discussed dissatisfaction with status quo, awareness of how they would like things

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PRINCIPLES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development should:

1. Be intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice.
2. Focus on student learning and specific curriculum content.
3. Align with school improvement priorities and goals.
4. Build strong working relationships among teachers.

Source: Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009, pp. 9-11.

How the Riverpoint Advanced Mathematics Partnership aligns with the principles for professional development

(Principle number in parentheses)

- Cross-sector collaborative learning community (4)
- Responsive professional development design (1, 2, 3)
- Common standards (2)
- Rich array of topics and activities (1, 2)
- Classroom observations (1, 2)
- Little changes (1, 2, 3)

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to look, including more open-ended questions and efforts to honor student thinking, and better classroom management. This disequilibrium suggests that they have the potential to make changes in the future.

As they made changes, many participants observed that students were showing more evidence of college-ready attributes such as increased perseverance, engagement, and responsibility for learning. In Brandon Mack's classes at Central Valley High School in Spokane, students decreased their reliance on him and took more responsibility for explaining concepts to each other and asking each other questions when they had difficulty. Molly Coulter taught algebra at Contract-Based Education, an alternative school in Spokane for students who had experienced long-term difficulty even attending classes. However, students liked her class so much they attended in far greater numbers than the room could comfortably accommodate.

The project structures contributed to participants' sense of commitment, collaborative learning, and initiation of instructional changes. These changes prompted students to develop and demonstrate essential attributes that were likely to improve their success in college. Participants developed a commitment to teaching intentionally and reflecting on their teaching, often through collaborative dialogue. Additionally, they developed deep mutual respect for each other, regardless of teaching level, and came to see themselves as part of a continuum of math educators. This perspective was a far cry from earlier antagonistic cross-sector efforts. This outcome demonstrates that other projects, especially those focused on student transitions, can accomplish similar results.

As planners and facilitators, we learned along with the participants. We learned how continuous evaluation and adjustment of project plans, according to participants' needs and responses, strengthened the work and results. These adjustments included engaging a cross-sector community in using norms of collaboration and problems solving, and asking each member of the group to make ongoing "little changes." We also learned that educators, with little time in their normal teaching environment to learn and reflect, appreciate opportunities to study and work with standards for student attributes, math content, and teaching and learning processes.

The project structures contributed to participants' sense of commitment, collaborative learning, and initiation of instructional changes.

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CREATING SYNERGY

CYCLE OF INQUIRY SHIFTS LEARNING TEAMS INTO HIGH GEAR

By Karl H. Clauset and Carlene U. Murphy

Through learning communities, schools can change to strengthen educator practice and improve student learning outcomes. So can districts.

For 20 years, we have helped states, districts, and schools in the United States and Canada implement Whole-Faculty Study Groups, a design for learning communities.

During the 2010-11 school year, we reconnected with colleagues across the United States to discover how their work with learning communities through the Whole-Faculty Study Groups design transformed the culture of schools and districts, strengthened educator practice, and improved student learning.

Their experiences demonstrate three key lessons:

1. Educators must focus on outcomes and inquiry cycles.
2. Learning teams, learning communities, and schools need ongoing support and pressure.
3. Sharing is essential.

These key points support the Outcomes standard of Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning. The overarching goal of Whole-Faculty Study Groups is to address student learning outcomes through sustained collaboration and professional learning that deepens teachers' "content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and understanding of how students learn the specific discipline" (Learning Forward. 2011, p. 50) and engages them in learning or creating new practices to implement in their classrooms.

THE WHOLE-FACULTY STUDY GROUPS DESIGN

In Whole-Faculty Study Groups, the school is a learning community comprised of teams of three to five educa-tors working collaboratively to address student learning needs. All certified staff belong to a learning team. In many schools, noncertified staff either have their own learning teams or belong to teacher learning teams. Even admin-istrators have their own learning teams, either within a building or across buildings. Sharing, learning, and col-laboration among learning teams create the synergy that makes each school a learning community. The principles of Whole-Faculty Study Groups are listed in the box on p. 31. The heart of the design is the cycle of inquiry or action research that learning teams undertake to improve educator practice and student learning. The question driv-ing their work is: What are students learning and achiev-ing as a result of what educators are learning and doing in their learning teams? With this focus on outcomes, job-embedded professional learning occurs in these inquiry cycles as teams:

- Clarify their focus, determine current student perfor-mance, and set targets;
- Identify content and best practices, develop expertise, and plan and practice interventions;
- Implement interventions, examine student work, as-sess impact, reflect on lessons learned, and plan next steps; and
- Assess and reflect on end-of-the-cycle results and plan for the next cycle.

LESSON 1:
EDUCATORS MUST FOCUS ON OUTCOMES AND INQUIRY CYCLES.

Paying attention to the work of learning communi-ties means focusing on cycles of continuous improve-ment. Principals in Franklin County, N.C., Wauconda, Ill., Holdrege, Neb., and Osborne, Kan., frequently moni-tor and support their learning communities' work in their inquiry cycles. They and their instructional coaches help

teams sharpen their focus, identify content and instructional strategies to use, build expertise, and apply their learning with students. They expect teams to reflect on their learning, their work as a team, and their impact on students. For example, Jewel Eason, principal at Bunn Elementary in Franklin County, asks learning communities to do a written reflection at the end of the year on four areas:

- Specific needs the learning community addressed and outcomes accomplished;
- Strategies that the learning community found to be most effective in classrooms and would suggest that others try;
- What the group knows now that it didn't know before; and
- Where the learning community is headed and whether a different perspective is needed.

In the Wauconda School District 118 in Island Lake, Ill., Matthews Middle School Principal David Wilm says, "Whole-Faculty Study Groups have provided an excellent systematic approach for us as a school and a district to engage in professional development to positively impact student achievement." At Matthews, teacher teams engage in cycles of action research to test their hypotheses about improving student learning outcomes.

One team focused on struggling adolescent readers who were in the lower quartile nationally and did not meet or exceed the Illinois Learning Standards for English Language Arts. They hypothesized that if they provided students with additional reading instructions using scientifically based interventions, students' fluency and comprehension would improve. Thirteen students were given an additional 45 minutes per day of reading instruction using the Read 180 program and small-group instruction on phonics and good reading habits. By midyear, 75% of students increased their reading Lexile, 93% of students scored higher in fluency on the winter benchmarks, and 43% of students met or exceeded their expected progress. In reflecting on their work, the team decided to continue working with students who had not made sufficient prog-

ress and identified several factors that may have affected progress, including lack of motivation with Read 180, student schedule conflicts that reduced instructional time, and the choice of diagnostic tool to assess progress every two weeks.

In the Osborne County (Kan.) School District, music teacher Kathy Conway said that cross-grade learning communities allow teachers time together to look at student needs, review data, and create interventions that work in a classroom. Teachers have a better understanding of each other as teachers and a better overview of how everyone fits together in the district as a team.

Julie Wolters, science teacher at Osborne Junior/ Senior High School, reported that her learning community focused on how to help students organize their thoughts and ideas to plan and complete classroom projects. During the first semester, she introduced her students to 3D graphic organizers called foldables, a hands-on learning activity that helps students organize data and material in class. She used learning community time to coordinate her plans and project outcomes with her group. They found that student learning increased when students were given an opportunity to digest information in a systematic, logical, and pictorial presentation.

PRINCIPLES OF WHOLE-FACULTY STUDY GROUPS

- Students are first.
- Everyone participates.
- Leadership is shared.
- Responsibility is equal.
- Improvement requires learning.
- The work is public.

In the second semester, the group determined that for many students, planning and completing projects are difficult because they don't always have role models or someone to encourage them. The group researched and created a new course that implements a tutoring program between high school and elementary school students.

In Holdrege, Neb., all K-12 teachers have participated since 2007 in Whole-Faculty Study Groups that meet every Friday afternoon. In 2010, the percentage of students at each assessed grade level meeting and exceeding state standards was exceptional compared to local districts and statewide percentages. Teachers and administrators attribute this performance to the groups' work in using data to improve student learning.

An important part of the work of learning communities is achieving the outcomes of improved instruction and improved student performance. In 2000, Louisiana launched the Learning-Intensive Networking Communities for Success, a whole-school reform effort that built an infrastructure for school-based professional learning and sustained teacher support to improve student learning (Langlois, 2010). The program continued through 2009, reaching more than 300 elementary, middle, and high schools across the state. Schools participated in the program for five years.

The program focused on changing school culture and increasing teacher expertise to achieve the desired outcomes — better teacher practice and improved student learning. The program consisted of five components: regional coordinators, school-based instructional coaches, Whole-Faculty Study Groups in every school, school leadership teams, and university-affiliated professional development.

Field-based regional coordinators worked directly with school and district staff, observing and coaching classroom teachers and instructional coaches, facilitating Whole-Faculty Study Groups, modeling lessons, conducting monthly professional development for instructional coaches, and providing support to schools.

At least one instructional coach from the program worked alongside classroom teachers, modeling lessons, coaching, facili-

tating Whole-Faculty Study Groups, and supporting the implementation of standards-based teaching and learning strategies.

Schools in the program received university professional development in their focus area (English language arts, math, or science). Schools sent teams of three coaches and/or teachers to the university program for three consecutive summers. Participants shared content and pedagogy with other teachers in study group meetings, grade-level and content-area meetings, and schoolwide professional development.

Researchers at Louisiana State University and Nicholls State University evaluated the program annually for the Louisiana Department of Education to measure the program's impact on student and teacher performance. Their results showed that, from 2000 to 2007, the percentage of students in participating schools scoring basic and above in English language arts and mathematics increased on state assessments. In addition, participating teachers demonstrated increased capability to design and teach standards-based lessons and increased ability to prepare rigorous standards-based student assessments.

LESSON 2:
LEARNING TEAMS, LEARNING COMMUNITIES, AND SCHOOLS NEED ONGOING SUPPORT AND PRESSURE.

Implementing and sustaining effective learning teams and communities is a lot like gardening. Care and attention produce results — increasing alignment and accountability. Part of the care and attention is setting clear expectations for learning teams and for school leaders.

After eight years of supporting the Whole-Faculty Study Groups design for learning teams in Springfield (Mo.) Public Schools, district professional learning leaders realized in 2010 that some staff and school leaders were not clear about the district's expectations for collaborative work or about how to effectively participate in or support learning teams.

In spring 2011, the district launched Site Professional Learning System. One administrator and a minimum of three teachers from each school attended a one-day session in May and June, during which professional learning staff emphasized key components, covered district expectations (see box at left), and outlined resources. Teams planned their kickoff with their faculties and their distribution of allocated time for learning team work.

In addition to setting clear expectations for the work of learning communities, school and district leaders model desired practices by actively participating in their own learning communities. In Hawthorn School District 73 in Vernon Hills, Ill., and Franklin County Schools in Louisburg, N.C., the districts created learning communities among school and district leaders.

In Franklin County, central office staff and school principals belong to cross-site administrator learning communities that meet monthly to engage in cycles of inquiry to address districtwide issues in teaching and learning. In 2009-10, focus areas included:

SITE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SYSTEM

District expectations for the Site Professional Learning System in Springfield (Mo.) Public Schools include:

- Teachers use contract time to actively engage in collaboration/learning.

- Data drives each team's work and classroom instruction.

- Plan and work must align with the school improvement plan and exhibit cycles of improvement.

- Teams document work and monitor outcomes.

- Leader provides written and verbal feedback to collaborative teams and opportunities to make the work public.

- Academic achievement gaps in reading and math for minority and low socioeconomic male students;
- Differentiated instruction;
- Increasing the graduation rate; and
- Supporting healthy lifestyles.

The action plans and logs from the countywide learning communities are posted on the same Moodle website as the faculty learning communities action plans and logs. Principals also share their learning community work at their school's instructional council meetings.

In Hawthorn, the planning council is a learning community comprised of school and district leaders charged with three main tasks:

1. Develop and recommend strategies that promote successful teaching and learning and integrate technology for all Hawthorn learners;
2. Model open and positive communication and identify ways to promote such communication throughout the Hawthorn learning community; and
3. Identify staff development initiatives that will help to enhance teaching and learning.

The planning council creates and implements ongoing professional learning for its members so that they can be more effective in leading their staffs in improving teaching and learning.

Modeling the element of coherence outlined in Learning Forward's Outcomes standard, these learning communities support educators in developing sustained, ongoing professional communication with other educators who are engaged in similar changes in their practice.

LESSON 3:
SHARING IS ESSENTIAL.

Sharing results and best practices among learning teams enhances faculty commitment to their collective responsibility for improving the learning of all students and ensures that professional learning is aligned with student learning goals. Learning teams tend to operate in isolation unless the principal and the school leadership team implement regular and frequent opportunities for teams to share strategies, lessons learned, and results with other teams and support schoolwide use of best practices.

In Franklin County, the district uses Moodle to support districtwide sharing of action plans and logs and mandates at least two instructional council meetings per year where learning community representatives and the school leadership team meet to share strategies, results, and lessons learned. In addition, Laurel Mill Elementary schedules workshops during the year for learning communities to teach other teams how to use specific strategies with students. Bunn Elementary and other schools use the principal's weekly staff newsletter and the school's parent newsletter to share the work of learning communities.

Sharing, learning, and collaboration among learning teams create the synergy that encourages teams to strive toward continually improving their practice and student learning outcomes.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORK

In Wauconda, Ill., Carthage, Mo., and Franklin County, N.C., teachers talked about their passion for the work they were doing in their teams and the importance and urgency they felt for improving learning for all students. Teams were not perceived as administrative structures, but rather as opportunities for collaboration and learning among team members focused on student learning needs. This embodies several of the Standards for Professional Learning, including the Outcomes and Learning Communities standards, highlighting collective responsibility and mutual accountability for continually advancing the learning of adults based on the specific learning needs of students.

In Franklin County, Jewel Eason, principal of Bunn Elementary, says, "I can attribute the work we began more than eight years ago using the Whole-Faculty Study Groups process with the high level of collaboration, especially across grade levels and disciplines, that we enjoy at our school. … The work we are doing is challenging, exciting, and meaningful."

Marsha Braxton, English language arts teacher at Bunn Middle School, says, "Sharing resources and ideas with colleagues at the Whole-Faculty Study Groups has proven essential to unraveling the Common Core standards for effective implementation in our classrooms this year."

At Fairview Elementary School in Carthage, Mo., 4th-grade teacher Lori Harter says, "We are intentional, focused, and adaptable as we educate our diverse population to prepare our students for their future, whether it be college, vocational school, or the workplace."

Rita Waynick, 4th-grade teacher at Fairview, describes the shift in the school's culture this way: "The teachers at Fairview Elementary are not just educators; they are scientists and theorists in the study of educating students."

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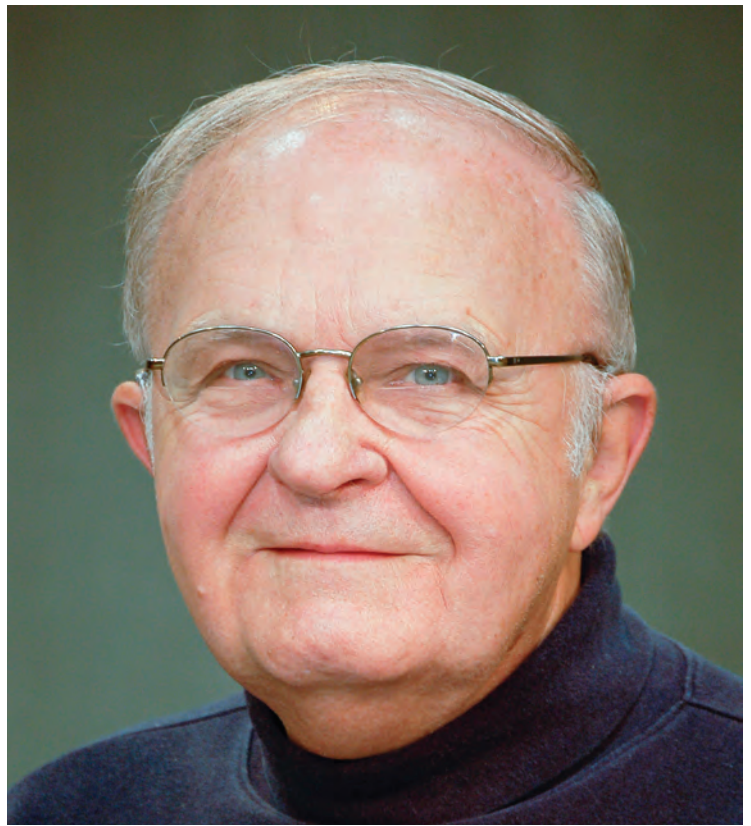
Robert Yager, professor of science education at the University of Iowa, brings scientific inquiry to teacher education.

Q&A

with

ROBERT YAGER

AN OUTCOMES PIONEER

SCIENCE EDUCATOR IS A PASSIONATE ADVOCATE FOR INSTILLING A TRUE SENSE OF INQUIRY THROUGHOUT EDUCATION

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. In 1999, Learning Forward (then NSDC) highlighted the Iowa Chautauqua Program in *What Works in the Middle: Results-Based Staff Development* (Killion, 1999) as one of the few staff development programs for science that could demonstrate results. The program included a range of learning designs, including summer institutes, coaching, demonstrations, action research, and curriculum development. Support for participants extended beyond the summer institute with follow-up in the fall and spring. Data from the program indicate that students of teachers in the Iowa Chautauqua Program outscored their nonparticipating counterparts in four of five domains, and scored at a similar level in the fifth domain. The program was active from 1982 to 2008.

Yager, professor of science education at the University of Iowa, remains active as a passionate advocate for instilling a true sense of inquiry throughout education.

JSD: I know you have a long history with professional development that leads to student outcomes. What makes professional learning effective in science?

Yager: The main thing is to start with what we expect from students. Science begins with not knowing. Unfortunately, in typical teaching, we don't start with what's not known — the answers are in a textbook or the laboratories

are directed. As a student, you're told why you are going to the lab, and you even know the answer before you do it. I've gone through a lot of science courses (as a student), and I've played the game of learning what the instructor said I should learn. And every college teacher likes someone who mimics them. But that's not doing science.

I've worked a lot, for more than 50 years, with teachers in workshops here in Iowa. I always try to liken what they're doing to science. They need to ask, where's the evidence that what they're doing is effective? I like to expect them to do something with their teaching, something creative, something where others didn't even see the connection. It's almost like living a part of a puzzle, instead of doing what you're told and repeating it over and over.

Too often, science in schools exists only through information included in textbooks. These texts and school courses are typically organized as biology, chemistry, physics, and earth science. These are accepted as "science." Unfortunately, these topics usually comprise the entire curriculum, leaving no room for the exploration of what is yet to be known. Information in textbooks has nothing to do with what science is or why and how it can be used.

AN INQUIRY PROCESS

JSD: In working all these years with teachers and urging them to be creative, what would you do to help them develop that creative mindset in themselves and in their students?

Yager: I try to stay off the stage, and I always try to get a team member with me. I like the idea of teachers working with teachers rather than the professional development person standing up in front of a group or having all the activities. The unique thing we did — we dealt with leaders who weren't going to preach but who were going to try to get students involved in their own projects and their own thinking and interacting with each other.

They would start with a problem, a personal project where, as a student, you can identify something, something that you wonder about, whether it's a personal problem or a societal problem. And that would be the whole science course. If the problem is societal, you have to get in teams of at least two. You have to go out, identify questions, identify experts, identify corrections, always look for things. You've got to share this with other people and share what you think you know and how you went about it. Rather than students just absorbing this information, it's the process of looking at what they went through and what they found out and where they got the information.

This learning wasn't something in a textbook, it wasn't something the teacher lectured about, it wasn't a lesson that was planned. It's something they did because they had a purpose.

I had an elementary ed major once in a course, and she said to me, "You're the worst teacher I've had. I can't understand what you want me to do." And I asked, "What don't you understand? I'm asking you to identify something that you're interested in, a problem you can do something about, find some information, work on that problem you've identified. What part of it don't you understand?"

We had 23 members in that class, and it's amazing what people came up with. An athlete had some sort of rare hemorrhaging in his blood system. He was a baseball player with a serious health problem, and he learned a lot of things to combat it. Another teacher had a kid who came to class late. When the teacher asked why he was late, the student said, "Oh, there were nine kids, and they clogged up the toilet." So she installed a toilet in her classroom, and the class researched where did the waste go and how did this all work. They tested nearly 50 brands of toilet paper. The teacher said she never thought she would see her new school superintendent with his head in a toilet in her classroom.

> I like to expect them to do something with their teaching, something creative, something where others didn't even see the connection. It's almost like living a part of a puzzle, instead of doing what you're told and repeating it over and over.

SUSTAINED LEARNING MODELS

JSD: How do you help teachers create this kind of a learning environment?

Yager: The Chautauqua model was a three- or four-week summer workshop. Then in October, we would come back with a three-day session to hear what plan teachers put into operation. We'd ask: "What have you done? What reports can you share? What were the local/personal problems? What did happen?" Some of them are going to be the next generation of teacher leaders. They're going to get other teachers involved.

We had control groups and action research projects, and the control groups were close enough to knowing what happened with their groups and with their kids so they wanted to learn more. We've won the war when they

LASTING LEGACY
for ACHIEVEMENT

**COLORADO COACHES BOOST TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS
WITH A RUBRIC FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

By Jean Cross

In 2006, the Weld County School District Re-8 in Fort Lupton, Colo., was eager to find a way to increase teacher effectiveness and, as a result, improve student achievement. This small, semirural district about 35 miles northeast of Denver grappled with high teacher turnover (34% in 2005) and low scores on state assessments (three out of four schools didn't make Adequate Yearly Progress). More than 52% of 2,400 students were eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. The district's demographics and needs matched the purposes of a federal Teacher Incentive Fund program to "develop and implement performance-based compensation systems for teachers and principals in order to increase educator effectiveness and student achievement in high-need schools" (Lee, 2010).

One of the core elements of the five-year grant is for professional development to improve practice. Using the grant, Weld County Re-8 placed one achievement coach in each building to work with teachers in their classrooms and forge new possibilities for professional learning. In addition, a half-time coach of coaches worked with principals, coaches, teachers, and students and served as liaison with district administrators and programs.

Coaches met biweekly in professional learning communities to study, discuss, analyze, reflect, seek, share, risk, and grow professionally in their coaching roles. Because of their efforts, the district gained coaches with expertise in teaching skills and adult learning, and teachers gained flexible formats for professional learning. And, in what may be the most significant product of their work, coaches developed a rubric for planning, facilitating, and evaluating professional learning in many formats. The overall result is a foundation that will continue to support and sustain high-quality professional learning in the district after the grant dollars disappear.

HOW THE RUBRIC WAS CREATED

Weld County's coaches knew that if they were to promote effective teaching behaviors, they would need to increase and deepen their own instructional skills. First, they examined best instructional practices described in *The Skillful Teacher: Building Your Teaching Skills* (Saphier, Haley-Speca, & Gower, 2008), research-based instruction ascribed by national organizations in content areas, and teacher performance standards in the district evaluation system. They increased their leadership skills with studies, training, and webinars about change theory, adult learning, Levels of Use, and facilitation strategies. They also engaged in consistent practice with coaching conversations, meta-coaching, reflection and goal setting, simulations, case study protocol, and analysis of videotaped coaching activities.

In their professional learning communities, coaches created the environment for learning that they sought to replicate in professional learning settings with teachers. They realized they needed to define the essential elements of their growth in their professional learning communities in order to transfer them to teachers' professional learning. Coaches decided to create a document that defined excellence for these elements — a rubric — and applied a qualitative process to build it.

The rubric was initially intended for use with professional development classes, but its use expanded to include principals, who used the rubric to plan building activities, and new coaches, who used the rubric as a training guide for their role as facilitators. While the rubric would be useful as a guide for high-quality professional learning, the

- Facilitator's rubric for professional learning, pp. 38-39
- Essential elements of quality professional learning: Quick guide, p. 43
- Essential elements of quality professional learning: Planning worksheet, p. 44

FACILITATOR'S RUBRIC FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING Weld County School District Re-8, Fort Lupton, Colo.

In summer 2009, achievement coaches reviewed current literature and best practices for facilitating professional learning for teachers. This led to a commitment to increase coaching skills of professional learning facilitators by creating a rubric to plan, implement, and evaluate professional learning. Coaches and facilitators also used the rubric to guide their own professional learning.

STAGE	INDICATOR	ADVANCED	PROFICIENT	PARTIAL PROFICIENT	UNSATISFACTORY
PLAN	**Clear outcomes and goals**	Goals are documented as SMART goals. Plan is created for teachers to monitor progress on goals.	Goals are documented as SMART goals. Plan is created to share goals orally and visually.	Goals are documented. No plan is created to share goals.	No clear outcomes or goals.
	Preassessment plan	Preassessment is based on goals. Plan for instructional options is created for differentiation.	Preassessment is based on goals to measure teacher readiness for content.	Preassessment plan is vague or irrelevant.	No preassessment plan.
	Peer review of plan	Professional development plan has been shared through multiple planning conversations before written plan. Written professional development plan is reviewed through multiple reflective conversations.	Professional development plan has been shared with a peer through a planning conversation before written plan. Written professional development plan is reviewed through a reflective conversation.	Professional development plan has been discussed with a peer before written plan or written plan has been informally reviewed by peers.	No discussion before written plan and no peer review of written plan.
	Rationale	Rationale is based on district or building-specific student data or teacher need and is backed by research data and researched best practice.	Rationale is based on student data or teacher need and is backed by research data.	Rationale is based on perceived need.	No rationale or rationale is based on personal preference.
	Facilitation strategies and transitions	Facilitation resources are embedded in the outline in order to assist in differentiation.	An outline shows evidence of a variety of adult learning strategies, triple tracking, and effective time management.	An outline or personal notes are prepared, but lack evidence of learning strategies, triple tracking, or time management.	No outline.
IMPLEMENT	**Learning cycle**	Facilitator uses an object, event, data, or question to engage participants with intended receptiveness. Facilitators activate participants' prior knowledge and guide interactive activities through modeling, questioning/probing, providing resources, and giving immediate and meaningful feedback to participants. Participants construct, apply, and extend their knowledge of concept.	Facilitators activate participants' prior knowledge and guide interactive activities through modeling, questioning/probing, providing resources, and giving immediate and meaningful feedback to participants. Participants construct, apply, and extend their knowledge of concept.	Facilitator makes minimal connections to participants' prior knowledge, guides some activities through modeling and questioning/probing, and gives minimal feedback to participants. Participants are given few opportunities to construct, apply, and extend their knowledge of concept.	Facilitator does not engage participants to begin session. Facilitator does not provide modeling, questioning, or feedback to students. Participants are given no opportunities to construct, apply, and extend their knowledge of concept.
	Engagement	Participants have multiple opportunities to effectively communicate, synthesize learning, and produce desired outcome within instructional setting (whole group, small group, partner, individual). Facilitator tailors communication strategies so that participants effectively express, listen, and adapt to others.	Participants have multiple opportunities to effectively communicate, synthesize learning, and produce desired outcome within instructional setting (whole group, small group, partner, individual).	Participants have few opportunities to communicate, synthesize learning, and produce desired outcome within instructional setting (whole group, small group, partner, individual).	Participants have no opportunities to communicate, synthesize learning, and produce desired outcome within instructional setting (whole group, small group, partner, individual).

STAGE	INDICATOR	ADVANCED	PROFICIENT	PARTIAL PROFICIENT	UNSATISFACTORY
IMPLEMENT	**Differentiation**	Facilitator implements effective instruction to address a range of learner needs. Instruction is more qualitative (deeper) than quantitative (more work). Instruction is rooted in assessment and is learner-centered. Instruction provides multiple approaches to content, process, and product. Extended activities are available for participants who demonstrate proficiency on preassessment. Participants and facilitator are learners together.	Facilitator implements effective instruction to address a range of learner needs. Instruction is more qualitative (deeper) than quantitative (more work). Instruction is rooted in assessment and is learner-centered.	Facilitator's instruction addresses the needs of the majority. All participants work on the same task at the same time. Instruction is mostly facilitator-directed.	Facilitator's instruction addresses the middle participant with no differentiation. All participants work on the same task at the same time with absence of any assessment. Instruction is facilitator-directed.
	Formative assessments	Facilitator consistently applies a variety of formative assessment strategies to monitor progress on specific goals in a timely manner, provides specific, individualized feedback to participants, and adjusts the facilitation plan as needed for individuals and the group.	Facilitator applies formative assessment strategies to monitor goals throughout the learning process, provides feedback to participants, and adjusts the facilitation plan as needed for the group.	Facilitator applies some formative assessment strategies related to goals, provides general feedback, and may make some adjustments in the facilitation plan.	Facilitator does not measure participants' progress in meeting goals during the learning process.
EVALUATE	**Sustainability**	Facilitator provides multiple resources for further research and review. Participants walk away with a written plan and timeline to implement as well as a plan to instruct/share the strategies, concepts, or practices in their classrooms/building.	Facilitator provides adequate resources for further research and review. Participants walk away with a written short- and long-term plan to implement the strategies, concepts, or practices in their classrooms.	Facilitator provides few resources for further research and review. Participants walk away with the intent to implement the strategies, concepts, or practices in their classrooms.	Facilitator provides no resources for further research and review. Participants walk away with no plan to implement the strategies, concepts, or practices in their classrooms.
	Feedback	Participants have an opportunity to complete a Likert scale, provide specific and descriptive written comments, and engage in dialogue as feedback to the facilitator. Facilitator provides group and individuals with specific and descriptive feedback based on goals and norms.	Participants have an opportunity to complete a Likert scale and provide specific and descriptive comments as feedback to the facilitator. Facilitator provides group and individual oral feedback to the participants based on goals and norms.	Participants have an opportunity to complete a Likert scale for quantifiable feedback for facilitator. Facilitator provides general and minimal feedback to the group.	Participants have no opportunity to provide feedback for facilitator. Facilitator provides no feedback for participants.
	Reflection	Facilitator reflects in writing on: 1) achievement of personal goals, and 2) generalizations from feedback, significance, and next steps needed to improve facilitation. Facilitator makes revision in plans indicating activities and presentation points that further increase effectiveness of professional development in relation to original facilitator goal.	Facilitator reflects in writing on: 1) achievement of personal goals, and 2) generalizations from feedback, significance, and next steps needed to improve facilitation.	Facilitator indicates that reflection has taken place and targets an area for improvement.	No evidence of reflection or future improvement.

Source: Weld County School District Re-8.

process of creating it became a source of deep professional learning for coaches.

Coaches' professional learning communities encouraged research, data, consensus, trust, honest communication, self-reflection, disclosure, goal setting and monitoring, and collective meaning making. These elements were crucial in completing the rubric. All of the coaches' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs about professional learning became embedded in the process and product the coaches pursued collectively and relentlessly.

The following steps outline the process used to create the rubric.

STEPS TO CREATE A RUBRIC FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

1. **Expand background knowledge for professional learning.**
   Coaches reviewed more than two dozen articles on professional development, professional learning communities, and adult learning. Using protocols such as gallery walks, an idea catcher, and jigsaw reading, coaches analyzed the articles and began to group ideas. The coaches' guiding question was: What can we do with this information to ensure that we get better over time in planning and facilitating professional learning?

   Coaches envisioned a rubric with four levels of proficiency for indicators in three categories: Plan, implement, and evaluate.

2. **Build the rubric with indicators and descriptions.**
   Coaches identified 12 indicators based on the literature review and a set of professional development standards that were the forerunners to the Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011). Each of three groups worked to describe proficiency for each indicator in its category. The whole group provided critical feedback on the proficiency descriptor before the next iteration, when coaching subgroups described advanced, partial proficiency, and unsatisfactory. Coaches continued their work at biweekly coaching academy sessions until they were ready to share the rubric with district and building

> **Coaches admit their professional learning extended far beyond creating a rubric. They learned that teacher effectiveness improves in many settings when a benchmark for excellence is applied.**

administrators. These professional colleagues deemed the rubric an informative synthesis of best practice, a consistent quality check for district professional development, and application of professional learning standards. They also saw a tool for planning building work groups (content, grade, vertical, departments). The final rubric was published in 2010 (see pp. 38-39).

3. **Use the rubric to promote professional learning for coaches.**
   Coaches engaged in professional learning through the following actions:
   - **Coaches self-assessed their skills and efficacy for each indicator.** They highlighted descriptors that represented their level of proficiency. This became a personal profile of strengths that would be shared with coaching peers and areas for growth that would become outcomes for individual or team learning.
   - **Coaches shared strategies they used to support advanced proficiency on rubric indicators, thereby affirming the expertise within the coaching team.** For example, a coach explained his advanced proficiency in rationale by explaining how he used state and district student achievement data to create outcomes on guided reading.
   - **Coaches identified rubric indicators and levels of proficiency that would be outcomes for their learning.** Where there was consensus, coaches created team goals: preassessment, differentiation, and sustainability. Each coach identified two additional indicators for in-

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STANDARDS CROSSWALK: HOW THE RUBRIC ALIGNS WITH STANDARDS

	PLAN	IMPLEMENT	EVALUATE
Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (2011) are embedded in each of the indicators of Weld County School District Re-8's rubric. Here is how the rubric aligns with the standards.	• Clear outcomes and goals: **Outcomes** • Preassessment plan: **Learning Designs** • Peer review of plan: **Learning Communities** • Rationale: **Data** • Facilitation strategies and transitions: **Learning Designs**	• Learning cycle: **Learning Designs** • Engagement: **Learning Designs** • Differentiation: **Learning Designs** • Formative assessments: **Data**	• Sustainability: **Implementation** • Feedback: **Data** • Reflection: **Data**

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dividual growth. For example, a coach set a SMART goal (specific, measurable, attainable, results-based, and time-bound) for the next year: "By (end of year), I will document reflections of three facilitated professional learning sessions including achievement of goals, feedback from peers/teachers, and goals for the next session. Currently, I will arrange for planning and reflecting conversations with a peer coach before and after a videotaped professional learning session."

Coaches invited education consultants to share resources and strategies for team goals. All resources were scanned and made accessible to coaches on an electronic file.

4. Use the rubric to plan, implement, and evaluate professional learning.

Coaches followed the rubric to develop learning designs and implement professional learning:

- **Coaches used Cognitive Coaching skills** to practice and reflect on these new facilitation skills and protocols. Conversations grew in depth and insight as coaches focused on rubric indicators and Cognitive Coaching skills.
- **Coaches created a document** asking for evidence of each indicator (see p. 43). The complete rubric continued to be the foundation of professional learning work, but coaches needed a quick reference guide to monitor progress, internalize the rubric, and expand questions for peer feedback.
- **Coaches also created a collaborative planning worksheet** to use and share with building leadership teams for planning their professional learning (see p. 44).

5. Recommend sustainability measures for high-quality professional learning and rubric.

Coaches admit their professional learning extended beyond creating a rubric. They learned that teacher effectiveness improves in many settings when a benchmark for excellence is applied. They also learned that professional learning is an unfolding process for themselves, teachers, and administrators. Coaches recommend the following to sustain high-quality professional development:

- **Schedule professional learning** with intermittent checkpoints to ensure practice, feedback, and higher levels of application.
- **Encourage teachers to initiate** their learning and select from a variety of formats to suit their needs and learning styles.
- **Enhance relevance and meaning** for teachers by inviting them to bring to the sessions their units and instructional sequences for direct application of strategies and concepts introduced in a session.
- **Invite principals and administrators** to participate

in professional learning and provide ongoing support of best practices through classroom observations and feedback to teachers.

- **Ask coaches to co-plan** and co-facilitate professional learning to ensure reflection on rubric indicators and to support differentiation for teachers' needs and readiness.
- **Revise the evaluation form** to reflect the rubric indicators so that teacher feedback guides facilitator reflections and future planning.
- **Increase the alignment** of topics and outcomes with teacher performance standards, which are the basis for increasing student achievement.

AN INVIGORATING EXPERIENCE

Recent research indicates that student achievement is directly related to teacher effectiveness. (Heck, 2009; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Springer et al., 2010; Stronge, 2010). By extension, growth in student achievement occurs because of growth in teacher effectiveness. The Weld County School District Re-8's efforts to increase teacher effectiveness in the district have invigorated coaches and teachers.

According to the report *Partnering for Compensation Reform* (Sommerfield, 2011), in the three years since the district implemented the program, teacher turnover has dropped from 34% in 2005 to 13% in 2010. While this decline is not entirely attributable to the new program, Carol Ruckel, district grant coordinator, believes it is one of a number of important factors. In addition, the district is providing better support for new teachers and paying more attention to teacher mentoring, both supported by the grant.

With each coaching interaction, teachers and coaches hone their skills and increase their appreciation of the power of and need for high-quality professional learning that makes a difference for students. Teachers who increased their students' achievement received incentive pay from the grant, but, more importantly, felt the satisfaction of increasing student achievement with new energy, worthy risks, strategies for thinking skills, and increased efficacy.

Roberta Chacon-Caciari, leader of the local teachers union, initially viewed the grant with some skepticism, but said, "There have been some phenomenal things that have come from this grant. … The biggest, most positive and wonderful thing that

Weld County School District Re-8
Fort Lupton, Colo.

Number of schools: **4**
Enrollment: **2,470**
Staff: **180**
Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	**27.7%**
Black:	**0.4%**
Hispanic:	**70%**
Asian/Pacific Islander:	**0.4%**
Native American:	**0.4%**
Other:	**0%**

Limited English proficient: **37.9%**
Languages spoken: **English, Spanish**
Free/reduced lunch: **67.5%**
Special education: **6.1%**
Contact: **Scott Graham**, director of data services
Email: **sgraham@ftlupton.k12. co.us**

has come out of the entire program has been the amount of training. It is just amazing, research-based training. There have been mentors and coaching that have been paid for to oversee professional development, but also going one-on-one to help people who are struggling. They are helping teachers get the resources they need to be successful and to implement best practices" (Sommerfield, 2011).

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ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF QUALITY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING QUICK GUIDE

STAGE	INDICATOR	QUESTIONS FOR FACILITATORS
PLAN	**Clear outcomes and goals**	• Are outcomes of session written as SMART goals? • What is the plan for communicating/keeping focus on these goals?
	Preassessment plan	• How is preassessment aligned with the outcomes? • In what ways does preassessment measure teachers' readiness for the content?
	Peer review of plan	• What are benefits of the Cognitive Coaching planning conversation with a coach? • What are benefits of a Cognitive Coaching reflective conversation about the written plan (draft)?
	Rationale	• What student achievement data support these outcomes? • What is the evidence of teachers' instructional practices that support the need for these outcomes?
	Facilitation strategies and transitions	• What are the adult learning strategies being used? • How is time managed, including transitions?
IMPLEMENT	**Learning cycle**	• How is prior knowledge evoked? • How do interactive activities include resources, deep processing, practice, rigor, and reflection?
	Engagement	• What are multiple opportunities for teachers to communicate, synthesize learning, and use feedback? • What are multiple structures used for interaction and feedback — whole group, small group, partner?
	Differentiation	• How is the range of teachers' needs addressed? • How will facilitators know if instruction meets teachers' needs?
	Formative assessments	• What formative assessment tools are used to adjust instruction toward outcomes? • How do formative assessments provide timely feedback?
EVALUATE	**Sustainability**	• What resources and supports are provided for teachers to continue pursuit of outcomes? • How will teachers share their short- and long-term plans to implement the outcomes?
	Feedback	• How and when will teachers provide specific and meaningful feedback to the facilitator? • How and when will the facilitator provide group and individual oral feedback to teachers based on goals and norms?
	Reflection	• When will facilitators collaboratively assess the professional development with this rubric and specific facilitator goals? • When will facilitators collaborate to analyze teacher feedback? • When will facilitators develop goals for next professional development based on this evaluation?

Source: Weld County School District Re-8.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF QUALITY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: PLANNING WORKSHEET

	INDICATOR	DESCRIPTORS	COLLABORATIVE PLANNING NOTES
PLAN	*Clear outcomes and goals:* What knowledge and skills will teachers gain?	• Learning goals. • Evidence of learning. • Communication plan.	
	Preassessment plan: How will we find out what teachers already know and need?	• Aligned with outcomes. • Measures readiness. • Measures learning styles/interests.	
	Peer review of plan: When will we review, rehearse, and revise the plan?	• Planning conversation date. • Reflecting conversation with draft data.	
	Rationale: What performance information is used to indicate need for outcomes and goals?	• Student achievement data and growth. • Teaching standards.	
	Facilitation strategies and transitions: Which 21st-century learning skills will we include in our plan?	• Adult learning strategies. • Time management and transitions.	
IMPLEMENT	*Learning cycle:* How will teachers be guided to work with new skills at a higher level?	• Prior knowledge. • Guided practice and demonstrate learning. • Reflection.	
	Engagement: In what ways will teachers be engaged in their learning?	• Multiple styles. • Multiple structures. • Interactive processing.	
	Differentiation: In what ways will we address a range of teacher needs?	• Levels of Use. • Interests and styles. • Need to know.	
	Formative assessments: How will formative assessments guide instruction toward outcome?	• Adjust instruction. • Timely feedback. • Peer/self monitoring.	
EVALUATE	*Sustainability:* How will teachers continue to practice and extend their learning?	• Resources/support. • Short-term goals. • Long-term goals.	
	Feedback: How will teachers and facilitators provide meaningful feedback?	• Teachers to facilitators. • Facilitator to teachers.	
	Reflection: How will reflection guide planning for future professional development?	• Analyze feedback. • Collaborate. • Facilitation goals for future professional development.	

Source: Weld County School District Re-8.

Continued from p. 35

want more, when they can testify, and when they can offer the evidence of what happened without being asked specifically. And then they'd get together again for three days in the spring, when they had done something for a whole nine weeks — the fall projects were shorter. It was a team of learners. Over the full year, it's almost like we formed a cooperative group of researchers.

JSD: How many teachers were you working with each summer?

Yager: Typically, it would be 30 people in the summer, and, many times, as we got things under control, we would have as many as five different settings. This had to be the science program for the whole school. One of our teachers taught at the school where he grew up — he had his 10th-grade biology teacher as a student, and this teacher was pretty much textbook-oriented, everything was planned out — and he even loosened him up a bit.

JSD: I'm curious about loosening up those teachers who

seem set in their ways. Is it seeing results that make them change their minds?

Yager: Yes, it does. Everybody likes a happy, enthused student. They're the best salespeople out there. Instead of it being a required course, because "I wanted to get into Harvard," students can see what they did with their questions, and they can talk about their experiences in actually doing science.

My dream would be that science education would become a science, would become a profession. If every teacher were a better learner, they would be models, and the idea would catch on with more people. Science is doubting, it is curiosity, it is trying to have ideas to explain things. It's about asking questions, learning more, and, in my mind, that's what Learning Forward should be all about.

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WRESTLING
WITH DATA

Learning network grapples with how to gather and analyze valuable information

By Harriette Thurber Rasmussen

As facilitator, I noted some trepidation in the room as the eight secondary principals from Eugene (Ore.) School District 4J quietly discussed questions that surfaced through their hopes and fears exercise. Could the practice of visiting classrooms together help them to better lead instruction in their buildings? Would this process stir up controversy with the teachers union?

How did they feel about including teachers in a practice they did not yet understand? Could the time they spend together affect student learning, helping to close a nagging and persistent achievement gap? In a district with a strong, sometimes challenging union presence and a history of highly prized independent practice, there were significant implications to the decision at hand: Should they implement instructional rounds, and, if so, why?

That was three years ago, and, although there was an inkling of the decision they were making through their reading of *Instructional Rounds* (City, Elmore, Fiarman,

& Teitel, 2009), that meeting launched a collaborative investigation into the nature of learning with data as a powerful ally. As the Learning About Learning Network, eight principals, eight teachers, and two central office representatives met every few months to painstakingly gather data about the instructional core — the relationship of student and teacher in the presence of content. Their goal? To analyze and understand the learning process in a way that would increase their capacity to lead instructional improvement. Did they reach it? I'm not sure we have that answer yet, but network members say what they learned transformed their practice. It turned their notion of data and how to use it upside down and has begun to shift a privatized culture into one that values collaborative practice. Even their time together as a network has transformed as they have pushed themselves toward more accountable practice.

Harriette Thurber Rasmussen

THE EARLY DAYS

Implementing instructional rounds was not easy, particularly with a mixed group of principals and teachers who had never worked together collaboratively. The group was off to a rocky start when I asked them to grade a sample video lesson in an attempt to reach several outcomes — none of which were realized. "You set us back," Monroe Middle School Principal Peter Tromba said as we debriefed the experience. "You can't ask us to be nonjudgmental and then have us evaluate what we just saw." We were careful for the next several meetings to avoid any semblance of conclusion as we learned to collect and analyze data. Our collaboratively developed norms were prominently displayed on table tents, and we ended each day reflecting whether we used the norms, whether they enabled the learning environment we needed, and what else might be required. Overkill? Maybe, but it seemed like we all walked on eggshells in fear that our time together would be mistaken as evaluation. "You can't use the word 'observation,'" admonished one network member. I learned to change my language and respect the institutional knowledge in the room. They knew the culture far better than I.

WHAT DATA?

One of the failed outcomes of that first practice video had been to try to turn their focus from teacher to student. Our mission was to learn about learning and, with one-half of network members responsible for evaluating the other half, it seemed smart to concentrate on the student as the primary data source. In time, they understood that students represent the most critical source of data about learning. Although I wanted them to learn to draw a causal link between the learning they saw and the teaching that caused it to happen, they discovered quickly that it was far more difficult to identify learning than to flag instructional moves. Even learning to look at the student instead of the teacher took some practice: *Look down, not up! What is the student actually doing? What is the task? No, not the assignment, but what is he or she actually writing down? Yes, do look over their shoulders. Yes, do talk to the students. How else will you know?* It also challenged a number of their assumptions about teaching and learning. One principal returned from a classroom visibly upset, declaring, "The teacher is doing everything right, but the kids aren't engaged!" It didn't take many examples like this for them to realize that the student was perhaps their most valuable data source.

Along with learning what data to gather and how to describe what they saw and heard without judgment, network members had to learn how specific the data needed to be. Was it enough to say that students were working in groups? Did they need to describe what students were actually doing in groups? Did they need to script what students were saying to each other? As facilitator, my job was to give them the space to figure it out, with enough structure to give validity to the process. And how they hated that process!

THE DREADED STICKIES

Virginia Seefeld generally sat with her arms crossed in a stance that suggested defiance but, in reality, was just plain dread. As a high school math teacher, Seefeld was

comfortable with data, but she found the affinity task, which involved sorting and classifying sticky notes, each with a piece of data about learning, to be particularly agitating. She was not alone. Everyone found the sorting process to be difficult, and even more so the labeling of the categories that emerged. This grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to data analysis seemed to stump them no end, regardless of how I structured the task. I fiddled with different prompts, directions, and sorting frameworks to make it less of a struggle, but it was just plain hard. The data on the stickies intended to surface patterns across the classrooms visited, but the route to the conclusions reached was not at all linear. They stayed with it, though, trying to make sense of what they saw that could both deepen their collective understanding about the learning process and inform their practice as leaders of learning.

> One of the most striking and interesting changes in their practice is the source of data, which now comes from the perspective of the learner, rather than the assumptions adults make as observers of the learning process.

OWNING THE WORK

That was three years ago. The network is still together, although their meetings look very different as they work with increasing focus and sophistication to collect and use data. They have adapted the structure and protocols to suit a tighter purpose: peer accountability for making something happen as a result of the data. The desire to have an accountable feedback loop has led them to add a second visit to each school later in the year to see what progress has been made as a result of the learning from the first visit. They also decided on a common network learning focus across the year to facilitate and deepen their learning stance. They have become a team that now guides secondary learning development across their schools.

A CULTURE IN TRANSITION

For a district so intentionally decentralized, developing a common language about teaching and learning, not to mention common practice, is significant. Five years ago, none of the district leadership thought this possible, if even desirable. But the network's practices seem to be shifting that culture. Before each visit, network schools pair up to develop a common focal point for their study of engagement and craft research questions that will be of value to both buildings. Network members visit two schools during each meeting, and, while the initial intent was to foster a tighter system of peer accountability, it has resulted in cross-building collaboration and strengthens members' understanding of the learning focus as they collect and analyze data in two different buildings.

One of the most striking and interesting changes in their practice is the source of data, which now comes from the perspective of the learner, rather than the assumptions adults make

SAMPLE HEADLINES FROM STUDENT INTERVIEW DATA

- Curiosity is heightened by newness and application to real-world or new settings.
- Student engagement is a balance of intellectual struggle and understanding.
- Motivation plays a role in student engagement.

as observers of the learning process. Network members still write what they notice about the instructional core and the task at hand, but most of their time in classrooms is spent scripting student responses to four questions derived from the research focus and current theory of engagement.

EVOLVING THEORIES

Planning for each visit by the host schools now includes analysis of their prevailing theory of engagement. The use of theory to explicitly guide data collection is new this year, and these theories have evolved over time, as have the questions that orient each visit. During one visit, network members explored the relationship among student engagement, learning targets, and task, with a theory that student engagement is present if students can explain what they are doing and how it moves their learning toward a meaningful target. Interview questions for students followed the story line of their hypothesis:

1. What are you working on?
2. What is the learning target for this lesson?
3. How is what you're doing/working on helping you to reach your learning target or goal?
4. Why is this target important?

Several months later, they investigated the relationship of engagement to personalization, theorizing that if student learning is personalized in some way (through differentiation, knowledge of students, relevance, or choice), then students will be more engaged. The two host schools developed questions designed to understand how students felt the topic or task was meaningful to them and why.

THE DEBRIEF

The day before our first meeting this year, network members asked me to develop a debriefing protocol that could be completed in an hour. I laughed. Our data analyses generally took at least three hours, and, even then, we never seemed to be quite finished. But the network's desire to visit two schools in a day necessitated adaptive facilitation, so I designed a rapid data transfer system. I also approached that first debrief with some trepidation. To my surprise, however, they completed the data transfer and analysis within 40 minutes and launched into group discussion of the headlines I had asked them to surface from the student interview data. As the year went on, I no-

ticed that the way they worked with data became more learner-centered and personality-driven. Some members would jump to conclusions and then poke into the data to see if they could justify what they thought they were seeing. Others spent more time reading the data before forming conclusions, sparking rich conversation and debate while keeping each other in the data with little prompting from me: What do our observational data and analysis tell us about engagement? How do they prove or disprove our current theory? Is there a relationship between the level of task complexity and engagement?

CHANGING PRACTICE

Some of the most powerful stories are the personal ones, shared by individuals whose experience in the Learning About Learning Network has changed how they think about data and its role in their leadership. B.J. Blake, Spencer Butte Middle School principal, now visits classrooms daily to interview students about their learning experiences and script their responses. She emails them, without comment, to the teacher. Her experience with analysis through the network has led her to understand that raw data is far more compelling feedback than advice. Other principals have also found that sharing raw classroom data has sparked authentic exploration by teachers into their practice.

Network teachers, too, describe changes in their practice and the leadership roles they've taken on in their buildings. Cecelia Brands reports common vocabulary and expectations that bridge math and science classes in her building. She is leading the creation of lesson study groups within the math department that will focus on student engagement and learning. In many ways, teachers have been the most visible and vocal proponents of the network through the actions they've taken. Where principals often need time to consider how the conclusions they've drawn can and should impact their practice, teachers immediately find use for the wisdom they mine from other classrooms and, particularly, the power of student voice in their classrooms as they reconsider the learning experience through their students' eyes.

TEACHERS AS COLLEAGUES

In fall 2011, network members met with the school board to discuss their work and how it has changed their practice. In telling a story that illustrated their evolution from doing the work, to *owning* the work, to *bearing responsibility for all students*, they discussed how they believed the district's investment in the Learning About Learning Networks (now numbering seven) has impacted practice and student learning. Much of the conversation revolved around the wisdom of including teachers, with a nod to the resource and political implications. Laurie Moses, the district's director of secondary education whose vision prompted that first meeting of principals, spoke adamantly about their decision to involve teachers: "Adding teachers has

helped keep us to the learning aspect of this work. They've been absolutely essential to our ability to focus. I cannot imagine doing this without them."

Others agree. When they learned that several of the district's newer networks do not yet include teachers, network members were astonished. "Having teachers there was profound because we found that principals would see things one way and teachers would see things another way," Blake said. "To have that perspective really changed my perspective in what goes on in a classroom."

PEER ACCOUNTABILITY

One of the network's goals this year was to promote stronger accountability for action, but the process is in its infancy. They struggle with a lack of time in the shortened debriefs and are experimenting with follow-up visits to the host school by a principal and teacher team. Their thinking is that by the next network meeting, the previous host will be ready to report on next steps that are planned as a direct result of the data and collegial debriefs. It will be interesting to see how this process evolves. As of this writing, the second set of visits, intended to measure progress from the baseline data drawn in the fall, have not begun. My experience suggests that the process will not be as linear as they imagine and that the exact structure for accountability will emerge, as have their collective and individual practices. I do believe it will be different.

> **One of the network's goals this year was to promote stronger accountability for action.**

What I expect to remain consistent, though, is the curiosity and level of conversation about the learning process that is very evolved from the fledgling instructional rounds networks I facilitate. This network's sophistication has come from years of rigorous work between principals and teachers and from a real struggle with ambiguity made possible through the trust they've found in each other as colleagues.

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A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

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

By Anthony Armstrong

In a private room at the back of a busy restaurant just outside of Tampa, Fla., drinks and appetizers went unnoticed as 12 diners sat around one large table and engaged in multiple rapid-fire conversations about professional learning. On one side of each conversation were representatives of Memphis (Tenn.) City Schools. The district was in its fourth year of a reform effort called the Teacher Effectiveness Initiative, designed to close student achievement gaps by ensuring that every student has an effective teacher every day. On the other side of each conversation sat a representative of Hillsborough County (Fla.) Public Schools, a district that has recently been recognized for its teacher evaluation and support reforms using a peer and mentor program.

The conversations covered the spectrum of work for each office, from processes, data technology, and resources to creating buy-in, providing incentives, and developing culture. Representatives of central office staff from each district took notes any way they could, on napkins, to-go menus, or cell phones. Handwritten notes covered the meeting facilitator's handouts and filled the margins. The discussions were a mixture of casual conversations, serious

analyses of professional learning philosophies, dining selections, and dessert choices.

What had inspired such a productive learning experience with this kind of frantic pace? The meeting was part of a learning walk experience set up by Learning Forward's Center for Results to offer Memphis central office staff a rare opportunity to meet face-to-face with staff from a district that had successfully navigated challenges similar to the ones Memphis faced.

Memphis City Schools had begun its Teacher Effectiveness Initiative by redefining what it means to be an effective teacher and used that definition to create new teacher effectiveness measures that would guide the district's decisions, support, and professional learning for teachers. The district sought to align its existing professional development with newly created teacher effectiveness measures, but it was a monumental task for such a large system, and Memphis leaders knew they couldn't do it alone.

"We were facing a large undertaking," said Monica Jordan, coordinator of reflective practice and instructional support for Memphis City Schools. "We had more than 80 courses available, but we had to ask: Are they all matching teachers' needs? Is the strength of the teacher considered? Is his or her practice getting better? We had several conversa-

tions about how big and complicated this was."

As part of an agreement with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Learning Forward's Center for Results helped Memphis develop a change leadership plan for the monumental task that lay ahead. According to the Center's Site Visit Protocol (see box on p. 53), looking at exemplars and models of successful professional learning programs "creates a vision of how they can establish effective, results-oriented communities of learners" (Psencik, n.d., p. 1). To go beyond simply reading about exemplar districts, though, the plan included a series of site visits that would give staff from Memphis an inside look at successful systems around the country through in-person meetings and guided tours.

The task ahead for Memphis was more than a simple realignment of goals. "We wanted people at every level to know exactly what they should do for their professional learning, whether it was coaching, a professional development session, or an online option," Jordan said. "We needed a deeper analysis of our program. We knew we needed pre- and post-observation data, pre- and post-student achievement analysis to see what's working. Plus, we wanted to build in choice and differentiation."

Hillsborough had been chosen for this visit because of the district's similarity to the challenges facing Memphis. Numerous inconsistencies existed within Hillsbor-

ough's teacher evaluation system, including tenuous links to professional learning, so the district set out to revamp the system in 2008 (von Frank, 2011, p. 32). Ultimately, Hillsborough instituted a peer and mentor system tied to teacher evaluations. Mentors guide teachers for their first two years of service. According to David Steele, chief information and technology officer for Hillsborough, these mentors don't conduct teacher observations during this time. This eliminates trust issues that can cloud communications in evaluative relationships. Peers, on the other hand, are trained, full-time observers for the teacher evaluation system.

Hillsborough's successful revamping of its teacher evaluation system includes using multiple measures of teacher effectiveness, which is a key first step in creating a high-performing system (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2010, p. 9), so Memphis leaders knew the district represented a valuable learning opportunity.

To guide district participants through an inquiry process based on Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning, the Center for Results created the Site Visit Protocol. The process helps districts identify "the professional learning planned, promoted, and supported by central staff to ensure the learning of all teachers and their students" (Psencik, n.d., p. 1). The Site Visit Protocol

Site Visit Protocol, p. 53.

includes four key steps for the learning walk: previsit planning, a prewalk meeting, the site visit, and a reflective post-walk meeting for the team to debrief and determine next steps.

PREVISIT PLANNING: BUILD A CLEAR FRAMEWORK

The protocol begins with a review of the Standards for Professional Learning and guidelines for selecting the site visit team. Once the team is selected, the protocol offers a series of sample questions for central office and school-based teams.

The questions, framed by the standards, are designed to help the visiting team focus its priorities. For example, when considering the host district's use of data, the visiting team might ask: What student performance data are collected at the school level to determine student growth and achievement? How is data analysis used to reshape school-based curriculum, assessment strategies, and instructional practices (Psencik, n.d., p. 9)?

Much has been written about Hillsborough's transition to its new teacher evaluation and support system, giving the Memphis team a chance to study the Hillsborough system before the visit. This became evident in the previsit planning stage, where many of the team's questions went below the surface to probe the philosophy or strategy behind the work. The team discussed details such as Hillsborough's use of terminology and the reasoning behind how observations were weighted.

For Jordan, though, the details of the roles that each staff member played in the process remained unanswered. "I really wanted to see what tradeoffs each layer of the organization was making in terms of supporting teachers," said Jordan. "I understood they had a system and route to getting every teacher supported, but I didn't understand the staff roles — who exactly was responsible for providing what kind of support."

PREWALK MEETING: SET EXPECTATIONS AND FOCUS

The Site Visit Protocol advises holding a prewalk meeting between the visiting team and members of the hosting district "to establish the purpose for the visit, the expected outcomes, the precise questions for the visit, and the assignments of team members" (Psencik, n.d., p. 5). For Memphis, this was the dinner meeting where team members from each district met at the Tampa restaurant and eagerly engaged in conversations about their work.

Over dinner, Steele gave the team a summary of the Hillsborough teacher mentor and peer program, which helped the

> The team explored such nuanced topics as the types of help teachers get in navigating the various components of the mentor and evaluation system, the effects of pulling top teachers out of classrooms to be peer advisors, how well the model would work for a principal pipeline, and what the staff would change if they could go back in time.

Memphis team refine its questions and plans for deeper learning. At the end of the evening, conversations turned to topics normally left out of case studies and formal articles.

"This kind of change is not for the faint of heart," said one Hillsborough team member, reflecting on the challenges of completely revamping professional learning for an entire system. "The single best advice I can give is that you have to commit to this kind of change. People and districts get scared just before the breakthroughs. You have to keep the lines of communication open and frequent. The communication gets easier and better as time goes on and morale goes up."

SITE VISIT: GET BEHIND THE SCENES

The next morning, the Memphis team met with representatives from multiple departments within Hillsborough County Public Schools to learn about each department's role in the teacher evaluation and mentor program. Discussions delved into how Hillsborough's peer and mentor program worked and its interactions with the district's teacher evaluation system. The team explored such nuanced topics as the types of help teachers get in navigating the various components of the mentor and evaluation system, the effects of pulling top teachers out of classrooms to be peer advisors, how well the model would work for a principal pipeline, and what the staff would change if they could go back in time.

A meeting with Steele followed to discuss the change process Hillsborough used to introduce its peer and evaluation programs. The Memphis team then lunched with Steele and the directors of the peer and mentor program, where they outlined the history of the program and explained its online components. Afterward, the Memphis team took a one-hour tour of Sam Rampello Downtown Partnership School, a local K-8 school, to get a feel for what peers and mentors look for during their observations.

Following the school tour, the Memphis team met with Liz Uppercue, principal of Sam Rampello. Uppercue explained the peer and mentor processes from the building leader's perspective. She discussed her role, the need for principals to let go of

SITE VISIT PROTOCOL

Here is a summary of the Learning Forward Site Visit Protocol's purpose, rationale, design, and process.

Purpose

The purpose of the Learning Forward Site Visit Protocol is to provide guidance for teams visiting school districts to determine the professional learning planned, promoted, and supported by central staff to ensure the learning of all teachers and students.

Rationale

When districts look to exemplars and models of professional learning that result in teacher and student learning, they accelerate their own learning and create a vision of how they can establish effective, results-oriented communities of learners.

Site visit team design

District site visit team members should be determined based on the purpose of the visit. However, since it is everyone's responsibility to positively impact teaching and learning, include formal and informal district leaders from all aspects of the organization to help those visiting see multiple perspectives, ensuring rich conversations that will result in greater value from the visit.

The ideal team includes:

- Chief academic officer
- Director of professional learning
- A secondary principal (possibly two — one middle school, one high school)
- At least one elementary principal (depending on the size of the district)
- At least one elementary, one middle, and one high school teacher
- At least one school coach (depending on the size of the district)
- District and/or school-based coaches

Length of visit

The length of the visit may be determined by the size of the district. Schedule enough time to ensure adequate visits with focus groups. Larger site visit teams will require fewer days.

Create a personalized protocol

The site visiting team should review the list of questions per standard and select the standards and the questions that best serve the needs of the district. Any question may be modified, and the team may write its own. Though the conversations should be natural during the visit and may lead to discovery of helpful information and data for the district, visiting teams should stay as close to their determined questions as possible to ensure that conversations during analysis yield the intended results for the visit.

The process

- The team will host a previsit meeting to establish the purpose for the visit, expected outcomes, precise questions for the visit, and team member assignments.
- During the visit, hold briefings each afternoon or evening to ensure that everyone is completing assignments and to make modifications if needed.
- The team will host a post-visit meeting to analyze data, identify key learnings, and make recommendations to incorporate into district and school plans.
- Meet with the superintendent or person responsible for the visit to share key learnings and make recommendations to incorporate into district and school plans.

Source: Psencik, n.d.

some elements of the evaluation process, and the challenges she faced in the early stages. After talking with Uppercue, the team met with a teacher mentor and her mentee, who discussed their roles, schedules, and the type of growth they saw throughout the experience.

These conversations helped Jordan clarify mentor roles and how teachers viewed their respective roles. "I had wanted to see how they juggle their schedules to mentor multiple teachers," said Jordan. "But when we spoke with the teachers, we were able to learn so much more. She shared things like how she had grown, thanks to her mentor, how the mentor addressed her anxieties, how they schedule her caseloads, and how she transitioned into a more self-guided role."

Once the school-based meetings ended, the Memphis team returned to district headquarters to meet with Tracye Brown and Steve Hagarty, communications directors for Hillsborough. The pair explained how communications focused on teachers during the change process. The strategy was to create a consistent message and send it out via multiple channels for teachers to access. The district established a website to explain the program, field questions and comments from faculty and staff, and offer podcasts from the superintendent. For the first year, teams from the communications department visited schools to meet with staff. The district posted a tool kit on its intranet, and the teachers union sponsored online communities.

POST-WALK MEETING: REFLECT ON THE LEARNING

At the end of the day, the Memphis team held a post-walk reflective meeting, which gave everyone a chance to look at the "key learnings" (Psencik, n.d., p. 5) and discuss what rec-

ommendations the team would make for its own district. The site visit facilitator stressed to team members the importance of articulating specifically what they learned and how they would like to implement it.

Tequilla Banks, head of the Teacher Effectiveness Initiative for Memphis and member of the visiting team, spotted the need to provide ongoing support for teachers. "The big takeaway for me was that we have to do some type of peer teacher support. Our focus has to be new and struggling teachers. I don't think we can have just an observer."

Jordan likened the interactions of the Hillsborough staff and departments to a relay race. "Once the staff person or department does their thing, someone else takes up the baton, and that person has a clearly defined role. I liked this because the teachers had their mentor or coach, and it was obvious what would happen at each step of the process. The teachers themselves knew what was going to happen, and they knew what kind of support they would get."

Jordan saw some tradeoffs in the system and was able to weigh the pros and cons for her district. "Since the mentors work one-on-one, it is not their job to develop proper professional learning courses or modules — that happens at the district level. Mentors have high-quality content already available for them, and their job is to make sure the content is put into practice by the teacher. This takes a lot of pressure off the mentor to know that high-quality content is there already."

The behind-the-scenes look into Hillsborough's system raised important questions for Memphis. "We decided we need to get clarity on everyone's role," said Jordan. "I work in the department of teacher talent and effectiveness. Do we need to focus on developing content or putting that content into practice? We are still figuring out what is most appropriate because it doesn't make sense for us to do everything."

Myra Whitney, executive director of professional development for Memphis City Schools, found the school visit to be especially helpful to understanding the principal's role. "The principal let us interview her staff and visit the entire school. The components she shared and highlighted convinced me of the program's ability to support principal effectiveness during the observation process."

The learning walks also highlighted for the Memphis team what the district is doing right. "The visit gave us a chance to understand what parts of other systems to emulate and where we could pat ourselves on the back," said Jordan. "For instance,

we were able to share our plans for using evaluation data as a catalyst for who gets what kind of support. We have people who are creating benchmarks for how much growth is capable in a year, and we were happy to share our plans for that."

The Hillsborough team allowed the Memphis staff to access a wealth of role-based tools and materials through Hillsborough's website, including role definitions, job descriptions, and tools for mentors and teachers.

Jordan also realized that a teacher mentor program offers teachers a partner to make sure they understand the professional learning content and give them feedback on implementation. "A lot of us think it is our role to do all of the work ourselves. We try to create, deliver, and put into practice the content, but then we realize we don't have the staff to do it all. Teachers need someone to help them plan to do what they just learned, plus they need to have someone figure out the degrees of implementation. This will give them a continuous loop of learning that doesn't start and stop with sitting and receiving a professional development course or module."

REFLECTIONS ON THE LEARNING WALK

For Jordan, the learning walk offered behind-the-scenes insights as well as two-way dialogue into what was working and not working for both districts. "The team at Hillsborough answered all of our questions and were very transparent about how they got there and what was working," said Jordan. "There was always an opportunity for give-and-take, a back-and-forth of ideas. I had done some research in advance and had contact with a representative of the district for years, but to get to go in person and talk to other people really added a whole new layer of richness and depth to my understanding of their work.

"The site visit gave us a chance to bond as a team, strategize, and think through the functions of our work," continued Jordan. "We didn't have the day-to-day work, the phone calls, or the meetings, and it forced us to think about our work in a way that we wouldn't have been able to back in our district. It helped us to focus and make sense of the learning."

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BOOMERS AND MILLENNIALS:
VIVE LA DIFFÉRENCE

How to mesh generational styles in a learning community

By Suzette Lovely

Teacher beliefs have a profound impact on instructional practice. According to Pajares (1992), beliefs determine how much effort a teacher puts forth and how long he or she will persist in the face of adversity. Many beliefs can be traced back to experiences teachers had when they were in school. Those early recollections of school events tend to be idealized and can taint perceptions of later events. Reluctance to alter those beliefs is not only a result of age and career stage, but also a consequence of collective memories and nostalgia.

A major challenge in learning community design is creating a culture of collaboration among teachers with different beliefs. While recent research has examined the importance of shared beliefs (e.g. attitudes and values) in a learning community, the relationship between generational ideals and collaborative practices in learning communities is relatively unexplored territory. Although the popular press has frequently discussed generational differences in

the workplace, stereotypes can lead to misunderstandings. For a learning community to work together smoothly and efficiently, members need to understand their differences so they can teach and learn together.

GENERATIONAL IMPRINT

A generation is defined as an identifiable group that shares birth years, age location, and significant events at critical junctures of development (Corsten, 1999; Kupperschmidt, 2000). Within each group, there is a sense of sameness, social identity, and reciprocal existence. Although there are no fixed boundaries to establish where one generation begins and another ends, new cohorts are said to emerge every 18 to 24 years. Generations become forever linked by the music, media, defining moments, and cultural norms of the times in which they grow up.

While the concept of a generation has various interpretations within the scientific community, scholars agree that beliefs, attitudes, and memories from adolescence provide a lens through which adult experiences are filtered. Although some people will fall outside the norm, generational effects remain fairly stable over a lifetime to form an imprint that distinguishes one group from another. When combined with pedagogical knowledge, a teacher's generational imprint can have a lasting impact on professional commitment, self-efficacy, and shared responsibility.

AN ABIDING FAITH IN EDUCATION

For baby boomers, who began teaching in the 1970s and early 1980s, expectations and career ideals are different from those who started teaching more recently. Generally speaking, baby boomers are a conservative group. They have continuously resisted reforms that compel them to give up their autonomy or engage in collaborative work (Johnson, 2004; Little, 1982). This group pursued teaching for distinct reasons. Teaching was considered a noble line of work. Socialization into the culture of schools reinforced these beliefs, including this generation's "abiding faith" in the promise of public education (Nieto, 2001, p. 10). Beyond that, limited career options for women and minorities drew baby boomers into teaching in large numbers. Intentional or not, closed doors to other occupations provided a "hidden subsidy" to America's schoolchildren (Johnson, 2004, p. 19). Women and minorities possessed remarkable talent and commitment. In addition, the structure of public schools provided job security and autonomy. Most baby boomers have spent their entire career in the same school or district, working within 150 miles of where they grew up.

I LOVE THIS JOB, BUT …

Teachers born in or after 1982, referred to as millennials, maintain different career ideals than earlier generations. Recent findings on new teacher attrition report that half of all departures stem from job dissatisfaction or the desire to pursue a better career inside or outside of education. Although teaching remains an appealing line of work, this generation is predicted to make job changes that are upwards, sideways, and backwards (Hess & Jepsen, 2009). In a retention study by Harvard University's Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, one young participant mused, "I love this job, but I think after four or five years of it, I'd be bored" (Peske, Liu, Johnson, Kauffman, & Kardos, 2001, p. 309). Another called herself "a work in progress," noting she wasn't exactly sure what she'd be doing in a few years. Although a 30-year relationship with an employer may not be essential, millennials do value new opportunities and strive to enhance their skills to make them more marketable.

Another distinction between older and younger teachers is that millennials are graduating from teacher preparation programs well-versed in the benefits of teamwork and collaboration. They expect to work directly with their peers to make their schools better, not just next door to them. Having been schooled during the proliferation of reforms and accountability, many millennials join the ranks thinking the system needs to be fixed (Johnson, 2004; Lovely & Buffum, 2007). They see their classroom as an integral part of a global community where immediate contributions to the profession can be made.

OLD VALUES, NEW REALITY

Although millennial teachers face new professional realities, many of their stories parallel stories of past generations. Nonetheless, old values take on new forms in the current context of schooling. Just as baby boomers established their own workplace identity, millennials maintain unique perspectives that will shape the future of teaching. As an emerging work group, this generation is more inclined to retool old values to match current beliefs than to relive the good old days.

One new reality for young teachers is that long hours are not part and parcel to good teaching. Millennials' strong allegiance to family, friends, and community compels them to put personal loyalties ahead of professional commitments. While baby boomers may perceive this as unwillingness to work hard, this generation sees it as a quality-of-life issue. For baby boomers, there is value in physically showing their work commitment. For millennials, punching a time clock is archaic, especially when they can work remotely.

A second new reality is change. As first adopters, millennials have a penchant to try new things. Instant access and rapid responses are the norm. Conventional boundaries blur as they move seamlessly among real, virtual, and hybrid worlds. While older teachers tend to resist change, younger teachers are

> **While the concept of a generation has various interpretations within the scientific community, scholars agree that beliefs, attitudes, and memories from adolescence provide a lens through which adult experiences are filtered.**

**THE MILLENNIAL
TEACHER**

- Expects to work
  with peers.
- Puts personal
  loyalties ahead of
  professional.
- Embraces change.
- Open to individual
  rewards.
- Adapts to shrinking
  job prospects.
- Not afraid to
  question authority.

**THE BOOMER
TEACHER**

- Values working
  independently.
- Puts professional
  ahead of personal.
- Resists change.
- Seeks equality
  in pay and
  protections.
- Laments shrinking
  job prospects.
- More deferent to
  authority.

driven by it. Drawing on an analysis of interviews with Canadian teachers, Hargreaves (2005) found young teachers not only flexed and adapted to shrinking job prospects, they were more pragmatic and enthusiastic about doing so. The past benefits and superior work lives baby boomers lament losing is not a worry for new professionals, despite many having yet to secure teaching jobs.

A third new reality is the sense of importance, inclusion, and optimism this generation brings to the workplace. As baby boomer parents and teachers pushed self-esteem, millennials' confidence soared. Believing they can do and be all, they are unafraid to question authority. While older principals and peers may see this as arrogance or disrespect, young teachers see it as a way to be in the know. Principal feedback is coveted, too, since it is important to know if they're doing a good job.

> **New realities
> are a compelling
> workplace
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> with finding
> and supporting
> committed
> teachers.**

A fourth new reality is fairness. While young teachers want to be treated fairly, they do not expect to be treated the same. Fairness to a baby boomer is equal — equal pay, equal expectations, equal protections. Fairness to a millennial is about ability, not uniformity. In a recent Public Agenda survey, 80% of millennial respondents said the removal of ineffective colleagues would raise the bar on performance (Coggshall, Ott, Behrstock, & Lasagna, 2010). Although this generation is skeptical about using standardized tests to measure teacher effectiveness, they are open to alternative compensation and rewards that recognize individual achievement.

New realities are a compelling workplace issue for school leaders charged with finding and supporting committed teachers. Key to the success of new teachers is this: How can we intervene to build cohesion for the sake of student learning? The expectations of millennial teachers are not a substitute for the expectations of the baby boomer teachers who will soon retire. New teachers recognize they have to leave no child behind, despite socioeconomic status, language proficiency, or special needs. Yet Howe and Strauss (2008) contend it is not this pressure that demoralizes millennials, but instead situations where their best effort under pressure does not produce success. In the eyes of a millennial, average is failure. Without acknowledging this new reality, millennials may struggle to become the accomplished educators society is expecting.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

Each generation maintains unique views about career success. Millennials are motivated by different opportunities, rewards, and working conditions than baby boomers. Perceptions about collaboration are an area where views do not always align. While a picture of effective collaboration might exist in teachers' minds, this picture can differ across age, career stage, and emotional state. Moreover, there are no easy-to-measure outcomes to evaluate high-quality collaboration.

To connect the dots, staff developers have to mesh old values with the new reality. Baby boomers have the most experience and institutional memory. Millennials bring fresh ideas and energy to the table. When working with young teachers, it is essential to incorporate their talent and initiative into the school's areas of emphasis. When working with seasoned teach-

ers, it is essential to honor their experience and craft knowledge.

In a generationally friendly work culture, teachers are interdependent. To integrate the expertise of older team members with the innovative impulses of younger teachers, learning leaders should consider five strategies (Lovely & Buffum, 2007):

Don't paint every generation with the same brush. Sweeping generalizations that all millennial teachers are one way and all baby boomers are another can lead to faulty assumptions. Acknowledge a team's diversity by keeping generational differences in mind. But don't believe every clash stems from those generational differences.

Let people argue with you. Encourage teachers to tell you what they think, even if they are much younger. Remember, millennials have been taught at an early age to share their opinions and speak their mind.

Show respect differently. Millennials don't want their ideas dismissed simply because they haven't been around very long. Baby boomers may expect more weight be given to their ideas because they've been around longer. To put respect in perspective, ask team members: What is it about respect (or lack thereof) that is keeping us from reaching agreement on this issue?

Give it to 'em their way. Continuous learning is vital to every generation. Teachers lose interest quickly if time is spent teaching them what they already know. No matter what stage of their career, teachers want to attend staff development related to their current assignment, not to their generation. At the same time, don't think every millennial is only interested in learning online or every baby boomer is afraid of a computer.

Offer a survivable experience. Two reasons young teachers leave the profession is a sense of isolation and difficult classroom assignments. Despite high departure rates among novices, it remains a common practice in schools to give young teachers multiple preps, combination classes, roving assignments, or behaviorally and academically challenged students. New teachers, whether older or younger, must have a survivable first-year experience.

FIND OPENINGS

Not all teachers will see eye-to-eye, even if they occupy the same generational niche. After all, personal differences among faculty have existed for decades. Yet teachers can no longer deal with their differences by closing their door. While millennials wish to be granted appropriate status as novices, they also want to be recognized for what they know. Opportunities in which staff members have the chance to reflect on and share perspectives about teaching will open the lines of communication. Without a collective mission where teamwork and collaboration are embedded in the work life of schools, generational identity may obscure progress. But given the right validation across age groups, diverse teacher perspectives can be used to enhance the professional learning culture.

> No matter what stage of their career, teachers want to attend staff development related to their current assignment, not to their generation. At the same time, don't think every millennial is only interested in learning online or every baby boomer is afraid of a computer.

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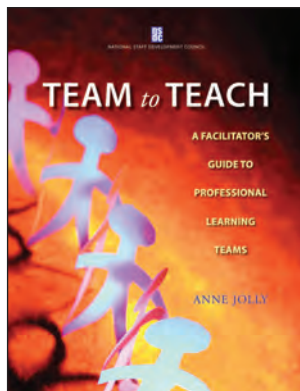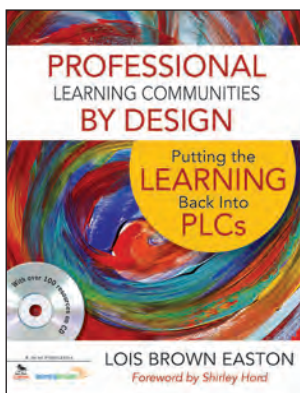
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TEAM UP
FOR GREAT LEARNING

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

Here is a powerful exercise I have done with both kids and adults. At its heart, the activity is about gaining a deep understanding of and appreciation for multiple, competing views of reality. No single person owns the truth about any given topic or thing — each of us owns a piece of the truth. If we welcome and leverage our differences toward common goals, we stand to build buy-in, true collaboration, stronger classrooms, schools, and communities. We stand to make the best possible decisions. I borrowed part of this activity from Barbara Sher, speaker, coach, and best-selling author.

— Susan Scott

SUPPLIES

- Paint chips in many colors, at least twice as many chips as there are participants.
- Paper and pencil.
- Striped beach ball.

STEPS

1. Spread out paint chips on a table. Ask participants to choose a color they really like.
2. Ask participants to write "I am" and insert the name of the paint color.
3. Ask them to write three or four lines as if they were speaking as the color. Give them an example, such as, "I am Blazer Red. I am warm. I am passionate. I am never boring." Or "I am azure. I am cool. I am peaceful. I am deep, like the ocean." Give them about one minute to do this.
4. Ask for volunteers to read what they wrote.
5. Ask: "Of all the colors you've heard about so far today and all the colors on the table, which color is the best color of all, the right color?" They will explain to you that there is no "best" or "right" color, that all of the colors are pretty terrific, and that, even if they could make everything turn into their favorite color, they wouldn't because it wouldn't be special anymore.
6. Ask if it had been hard to choose their color. You can also ask if choosing their color seemed important. Most will say that it had taken them awhile and that it did seem important because they like lots of colors, and even though they had a favorite color, there are so many shades of red, blue, green, and they wanted to find the one they liked the best.
7. Suggest that one of the reasons why they really thought about what color they chose is because the things they wrote about that color describe them. Suggest that they stand and read what they wrote, but instead of the name of their color,

say their name. For example, "I am Susan. I am cool. I am peaceful. I am deep like the ocean."

8. Ask: "So who's the best? Who's the right kind of person?" Go on to say something like, "We don't

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often talk about ourselves in this way, do we? We don't usually introduce ourselves with, 'I'm fiery and passionate' or 'I'm peaceful and deep.' But when we get to know each other, we notice these qualities, right? And if any one of you were not here, we would feel it. We would miss what you bring into the room with you when you arrive every day. So keep being you because there's not another you anywhere in the universe. You're it!"

If there is time, go on to part 2 of this exercise.

PART 2

1. Hold up a large, striped beach ball and ask participants what colors they see on the beach ball. Imagine this beach ball is the world, and every person in the world lives on a different colored stripe. There would be billions of stripes, each stripe a different color. Let's say that I live on the blue stripe. Hold the beach ball right up to your face, with your nose pressed to the blue stripe. From where I live, can I see the orange stripe? No. Or the red stripe or the green stripe? No. So if you asked me what color the world is, what would I probably say? Blue. Would I be right about that? Yes and no. There is blue, yes, and there are other colors as well. So who owns the truth about what color the world is? Let participants discuss. In fact, everyone owns a piece of the truth, and no one owns the entire truth because we can only see the world from our own perspectives.

2. So, for example, if I had a problem, and if I asked each of you to tell me what you think I should do to solve my problem, how many different ideas might I hear? As many different ideas as there are people in the room. I'd hear blue ideas and green ideas and pink ideas. And if I listened to all of your ideas, do you

think that I might hear some ideas that are better than the one I had, and that this might help me make the best decision about how to solve my problem?

3. So here we are. Each of us sees the world a bit differently; each of us has different ideas, different perspectives. Is this a problem or a good thing? Let participants discuss. Draw them out.

WHY DO THIS EXERCISE?

Perhaps you, like me, are fatigued by the foolishness, the arrogance, and the intransigence of many people on this planet, including leaders, who make decisions without input from others, ignoring competing perspectives. Their goal is to get agreement and issue mandates. Their goal is to *be* right, rather than to *get it right* for all of us. Consequently, some of their decisions end up causing pain and hardship, making us weep on too many fine days.

As educators and administrators, we are obligated to prepare students to thrive, not only in a multicultural classroom, but also in the world, where they will make their way amidst people who have beliefs, aspirations, and perspectives as diverse as the colors on a painter's palette.

THREE BELIEFS

I have three beliefs I feel are essential for success, happiness, and the ability to collaborate with the members of a global community.

The first is from Madeleine Albright, former U.S. secretary of state. When asked what advice she would give world leaders, she said, "What matters anywhere matters everywhere." If one part of the world, one member of a

family, one team within an organization is struggling, it matters to the rest of the world, family, organization. Or should.

The second belief is: There is more than one right way to live a life. Consequently, when we have problems to solve and decisions to make, it would behoove us to invite competing perspectives before taking action.

The third belief is: In a very real sense, the progress of the world depends on my progress as an individual, now. So what am *I* modeling *now*? Being right or getting it right? Issuing mandates or inviting input? Delivering a monologue or inviting a conversation? The quality of the conversations in classrooms all over the world model for students how they should show up in the world. I think there is work to be done.

LEARN, PRACTICE, AND MODEL

As human beings, we all need the skills to understand each other, to hear, acknowledge, and welcome a diversity of opinions so that we can innovate and work together to realize our collective visions and goals. The same skills that students need to navigate their lives through college and careers are the same skills adults need to demonstrate to students. One of the most powerful examples we set as adults is to learn, practice, and model this kind of collaboration — whether in our leadership teams, professional learning communities, or in the classroom. This will demonstrate to students that, while we don't need to agree with one another, we do need to understand and respect each other. Students are watching how we treat each other. We can't ask of them what we're not willing to practice ourselves. ■

Nelson

Guerra

Use lessons in similarities and differences to help students understand diversity

A student teacher recently observed a troubling interaction between two students in a 1st-grade classroom. The two students were talking as they worked on a project. One of the students said something about his mom and dad. The other student replied, "I have two moms." The first student looked up at the other student inquisitively and said, "Really? That's weird." The second student took offense, and an argument began. In addressing the issue, the lead teacher focused on the importance of being kind and always using nice words.

In reflecting on this incident, the student teacher questioned whether it was enough to simply tell students to be nice to one another when clearly there was a bigger issue at the heart of this incident. How, the student teacher wondered, do you address issues of diversity in the classroom with students? How do you help students, particularly young students, understand differences among their classmates, whether it's race, class, gender, sexual orientation, language, ability, or religion? These are difficult subjects even for adults, and the potential for conflict is high when discussing them. What, the student teacher wanted to

know, do we recommend to teachers?

Discussing issues of diversity can be challenging, and many teachers feel unequipped to engage in these kinds of conversations. They fear that bringing up issues of diversity may lead to conflict. Rather than risk creating a problem, teachers often avoid such situations by steering the conversation in another direction. While this is understandable, it doesn't resolve the problem and doesn't teach students an essential skill — how to understand and address diversity.

Whether or not teachers talk about issues of diversity, students are keenly aware of differences in the classroom. Young students may innocently ask why another student doesn't look the same or sounds different when he talks. Older students often question why they must be accepting of someone who doesn't look or act "normal." If such questions are met with indirect answers or are ignored, students learn that talking about difference is unacceptable. Over time, they tacitly learn that being different is unacceptable. As the student teacher in the story above said, "Diversity seems to be the elephant in the classroom." Indeed, in many classrooms, diversity is the elephant,

ever-present, affecting everything that goes on, but never acknowledged.

TALK ABOUT THE ELEPHANT

For teachers who want to acknowledge diversity and teach students to value it, the place to start is by really looking at students and seeking to understand who they are. This sounds simple, but can be a challenge

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In each issue of *JSD*, Patricia L. Guerra and Sarah W. Nelson write about the importance of and strategies for developing cultural awareness in teachers and schools. Guerra (pg16@txstate.edu) is an assistant professor and Nelson (swnelson@txstate.edu) is an associate professor in the Department of Education and Community Leadership at Texas State University-San Marcos. Guerra and Nelson are co-founders of Transforming Schools for a Multicultural Society (TRANSFORMS). Columns are available at www.learningforward.org/publications/jsd.

in today's data-driven classroom. In an effort to meet students' academic needs, too often the focus is on discrete pieces of data. Teachers can tell you a student's reading level, which questions the student missed on the previous year's accountability tests, how many points the student needs to improve in order to pass future accountability tests, what the student's English proficiency level is, how the student responded to academic interventions, and where the student's academic performance ranks in comparison to peers. In some cases, teachers even know the student's height-to-weight ratio and the likelihood the student will develop diabetes.

Knowing all of these data can give teachers the mistaken impression that they know their students. While data may be useful, it isn't equivalent to knowing students. To know students, teachers must look beyond data to see what values, identities, and experiences students bring to the classroom. With what race or ethnic group does the student identify? Does the student or someone in the student's family speak more than one language? What religion or belief system does the student bring to the classroom? Does the student live with one parent? Two parents? A grandparent? What talents and interests does the student have?

Knowing students in this way helps the teacher understand the diversity that is present in the classroom. Being aware of similarities and differences among students allows a teacher to strategically create opportunities for students to learn about diversity. Teachers can use a process for creating a classroom that helps students understand and value diversity.

START WITH SIMILARITIES

The foundation of a classroom that values diversity is the understanding that no matter how diverse a group of people may be, there are more similarities than differences among them. To help students recognize this, begin with activities that highlight aspects students share. These activities can emphasize concrete similarities, such as learning about the history and traditions of the school, or they can be more abstract similarities such as drawing or writing about hopes and dreams. The key to these activities is to focus on what is similar so that students begin to see likeness rather than difference.

ACKNOWLEDGE DIFFERENCES

While it is important to recognize similarities, it is equally important to acknowledge and expect differences. It is natural for students to be wary of the unfamiliar. However, left unchecked, this wariness can cause students to avoid interacting with anyone they perceive as too different. In turn, this leads to students segregating themselves into groups of likeness that leave some students feeling excluded. Engaging students in activities that emphasize the positive aspects of difference can let students know that it is normal and not something to fear. Team-building activities, for example, draw on the concept of difference as a positive by bringing diverse people together to make a stronger team. Other activities that help students see differences include heritage studies that allow students to share family stories and artifacts, graphing activities based on student preference polls (e.g. food, music, or sports teams), and activities that highlight student interests and talents.

TEACH STRATEGIES

Even if students expect that there will be differences among people, they might not know how to address difference without conflict. It is one thing for students to have differing views on the best flavor of ice cream. It is quite another for students to understand religious differences. In order to negotiate difference, students must know how to discuss it constructively. They must then learn how to make accommodations for differences when necessary. Teaching these skills depends on the student's age. Young children can learn to talk about differences through discussions that require them to discuss their preference for something such as a favorite book or activity without putting down someone else's preference. Older students can learn to discuss difference by debating current events using established rules of debate. Students of all ages can learn accommodation skills through problem-solving activities that require students to come up with a group solution that doesn't rely on voting or other forms of majority rule. Accommodation requires compromise and consensus, which is absent when a decision is made through majority rule.

PREPARE TEACHERS TO MOVE THE ELEPHANT

Teachers look to professional developers when they have questions such as the one the student teacher asked in the opening scenario. How would you have responded? What would you have said to the teacher in the room if you had witnessed the interaction between the two students? Professional developers must be prepared to help teachers address issues of diversity that arise in their classrooms.

Professional developers can help teachers understand that teaching students about diversity minimizes conflicts and gives students essential tools for interacting with people. By giving teachers the tools to help students talk about diversity, professional developers help to make classrooms places where difference is not only expected, but valued. Without support through high-quality professional development, the elephant is likely to remain in the classroom, and students will continue to be unprepared to negotiate the ever-increasing diversity in their schools, their communities, and the world. ■

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TOOLS FOR LEARNING SCHOOLS

http://tinyurl.com/9jawet8
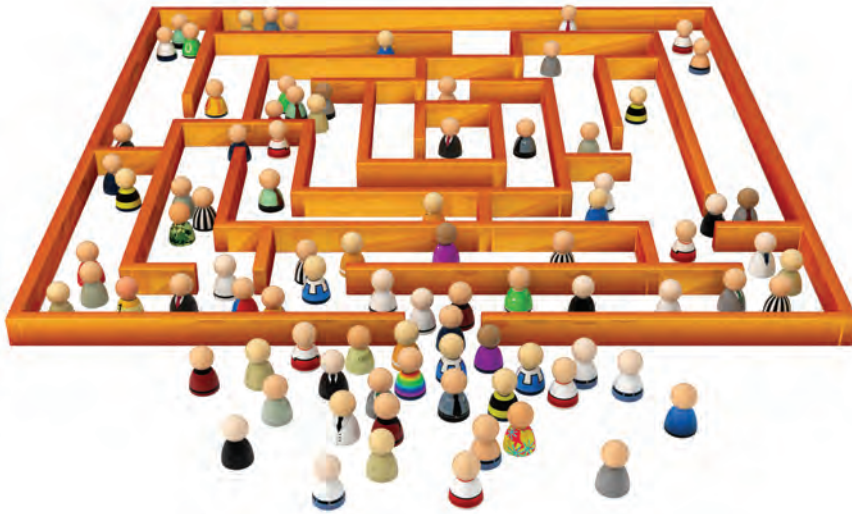
A common question many educators ask about the Standards for Professional Learning is, "Where do I start?" It can be a daunting task to introduce a new, unfamiliar topic to school and district leaders. In the Fall 2012 issue of *Tools for Learning Schools,* Anthony Armstrong says the key to getting started is using current initiatives as entry points for discussions about standards-based professional learning. The newsletter includes four tools to help introduce the standards. Additional resources available online include the facilitator guide to the standards as well as links to related topics.

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Click on Learning Forward's Facebook page to find photos and videos from Learning Forward events, posts from members, and links to professional learning news. Check back often for a chance to take advantage of special offers — recent opportunities include a free five-day registration to the 2012 Annual Conference in Boston in December.

LEARNING EXCHANGE

http://community.learningforward.org/home

Connect with educators from around the world on the Learning Exchange, Learning Forward's updated online community platform. Participate in ongoing discussions on professional learning topics, share resources, videos, and learning strategies, and get a head start on conference networking in our 2012 Annual Conference forum. Search for and connect with colleagues in your state, at your grade level, or with similar interests.

ADVICE TO LEGISLATORS

http://tinyurl.com/8vd7x3r

Learning Forward Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh discusses what legislators can do to improve education:

"Professional learning is the main strategy that schools have to ensure that all teachers are constantly improving their craft. And the definition that we advance calls for teachers to do this as members of learning teams, rather than isolated from each other. This definition calls for all teachers assigned to collaborative learning communities charged with the responsibility for the success of a group of students, not just the students assigned to their particular classroom. When this definition is adopted, it means that what is working in one classroom is systematically spread across all classrooms, so that every student benefits from the expertise of all teachers in the grade level rather than just one teacher."

Hirsh

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abstracts

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.

coming up

in December 2012
JSD:

The Leadership standard
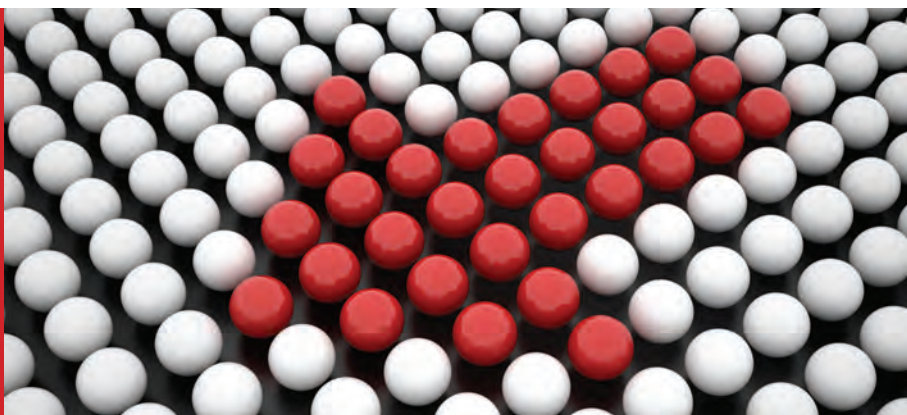
features

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.

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.

@ learning forward

New report addresses investing for Common Core

Investing in professional learning is crucial, and even more so when implementing a high-stakes initiative such as the Common Core State Standards. That's why Learning Forward has published a new brief, *Meet the Promise of Content Standards: Investing in Professional Learning.*

The brief explores the growing needs of educators with the advent of new standards and assessments, and calls attention to the urgent need for schools, districts, states, regional and national education agencies, and education vendors to rethink how professional learning resources are allocated.

Co-authors Joellen Killion and Stephanie Hirsh outline the increasing need for professional learning, why traditional professional learning will fail, how the Standards for Professional Learning define resources, and how investments in professional learning must change.

"To achieve the results promised in Common Core Standards, states and district and school leaders must make smart and new investments in the capacity of educators," the authors write. "Successful implementation of Common Core standards that leads to every student being college- and career-ready requires a renewed commitment and focus from all policy and decision makers, elected, employed, or engaged within school communities" (Killion & Hirsh, 2012, p. 10).

The report includes recommendations for investments that schools, districts, states, and other education agencies can make in professional learning.

"Professional learning is fundamental to ensuring teacher quality and effectiveness," says co-author Joellen Killion, Learning Forward's senior advisor and director of the Transforming Professional Learning initiative. "In order to have clear outcomes from professional learning, we must have a long-term plan and sustained resources for supporting implementation."

This brief is part of Learning Forward's initiative Transforming Professional Learning to Prepare College- and Career-Ready Students: Implementing the Common Core, which is supported in part by the Sandler Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and MetLife Foundation.

REFERENCE

Killion, J. & Hirsh, S. (2012). *Meet the promise of content standards: Investing in professional learning.* Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

To learn more about the Transforming Professional Learning Initiative or to download the brief, visit **www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core.**

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book club

SCHOOLS CAN CHANGE:
A Step-by-Step Change Creation System for Building Innovative Schools and Increasing Student Learning
By Dale W. Lick, Karl H. Clauset, and Carlene U. Murphy
Foreword by Carlene U. Murphy

Genuine effective school improvement requires leaders and teachers to be part of a broad-based, creative change system that focuses on generating improved teacher practices for enhancing student learning. Based on more than two decades of success with the Whole-Faculty Study Groups approach to professional learning, this guide provides educators with a step-by-step, systemic "change creation" approach for:

- Forming action teams to develop teaching and learning approaches that measurably improve student performance; and
- Nurturing the right leadership, vision, culture, and relationships within schools for innovation and creativity.

The companion website includes practical online resources, including templates, checklists, action team assessment forms, and an action team rubric.

Through a partnership with Corwin Press, Learning Forward members can add the Book Club to their membership at any time and receive four books a year for $69 (for U.S. mailing addresses). To receive this book, add the Book Club to your membership before Dec. 15. For more information about this or any membership package, call **800-727-7288** or email **office@learningforward.org.**

With a focus on standards, coherence, and outcomes, we can realize ambitious and necessary goals

on board
KENNETH SALIM

This summer, I was appointed superintendent of schools in Weymouth, Mass. Since starting this new role, I have focused on listening and learning from teachers and administrators, students and parents, and the partners who work with the school community — local businesses, neighborhood associations, parent councils, faith-based institutions, and others.

When taking on a new role, leaders benefit when they dedicate time to learn about the strengths and challenges of their new organization. The literature on entry for both public and private sector organizations (Jentz & Wofford, 1982; Watkins, 2003) emphasizes the importance of forming a "learning agenda" to understand an organization's history and culture before developing goals or strategies. Indeed, as the first superintendent who has been hired from outside the district since the 1960s, I find it important to learn about the community's successes, challenges, and opportunities from the practitioners and stakeholders who have been on the front lines.

The entry period has also given me a chance to express my core beliefs on educational improvement and professional learning. Several of these core beliefs share key elements with Learning Forward's Standards

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Kenneth Salim is president of Learning Forward's board of trustees.

for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011). In meetings with staff, I discussed my view that exceptional standards must guide our decisions. If our goal is to produce graduates who are world-class citizens, we need to use world-class standards that shape our work and set the bar for student learning. Similarly, the Outcomes standard that is the focus of this issue of *JSD* describes the important role of standards when determining the content of professional learning. This standard notes that professional learning must consider performance standards that describe how educators effectively teach and successfully lead. In addition, professional learning should consider content learning standards and outcomes for students.

Another of my core beliefs is that teaching and learning need to be at the center of our work. We should consider how the decisions we make affect teaching and learning in the classroom. I believe that keeping the instructional core at the center of our work also supports stronger alignment and coherence between and among classrooms, schools, and central office. The Outcomes standard highlights the importance of coherence. Professional learning should build on what educators have learned and also align

with local and national curriculum and assessments. The standard puts forth a vision of coherence that extends beyond the school system to a model that aligns an educator's preparation program experience with every stage of his or her career.

I firmly believe that it is critical to leverage the energy and skills of our educators and the broader community. With a focus on standards, coherence, and outcomes for students and educators, we can we realize the ambitious and necessary goals we have for students.

REFERENCES

Jentz, B. & Wofford J. (1982). *Entry: The hiring, start-up and supervision of administrators.* New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

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

Watkins, M. (2003). *The first 90 days.* Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press. ∎

Chidley recipient confronts challenges in rural Alaska

Game changers are visionaries — dreamers and innovators with ideas that make a difference. Tonio Verzone, a recipient of the 2012 Chidley Fund Academy Scholarship, is a game changer. Verzone is lead facilitator for Avante-Garde Learning Alliance, a not-for-profit organization in Anchorage, Alaska, that works through partnerships to build the capacity of Alaska's schools and communities to support student learning.
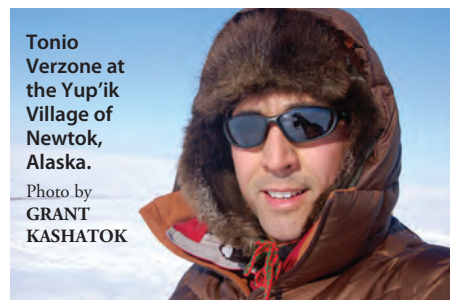
The Chidley award, funded by the Learning Forward Foundation, develops leadership in professional learning by providing two scholarships annually for recipients to participate in the Learning Forward Academy. Both scholarships are for educators working with large populations of underserved students.

Alaska's rural environment and extreme climate pose significant challenges to student success: high dropout rates, schooling that is disconnected from local cultures and needs, high teacher turnover, remote and rural school settings, high transportation costs, and limited opportunities for high-quality professional learning.

Verzone's goal is to increase student achievement in reading and mathematics in three rural communities by increasing educators' ability to individualize instruction and use assessments to drive instruction. By participating in the Learning Forward Academy, he will be able to provide culturally responsive professional development and technical assistance.

Tonio Verzone at the Yup'ik Village of Newtok, Alaska.
Photo by **GRANT KASHATOK**

LEARNING FORWARD FOUNDATION

Help to change lives by donating to the Learning Forward Foundation. The foundation is dedicated to impacting the future of leadership in schools that act on the belief that continuous learning by educators is essential to improving the achievement of all students. Donations to the foundation help to provide funding for a variety of grants and scholarships to support the continuous learning of superintendents, principals, leadership teams, and individuals.

www.learningforward.org/ foundation

The Learning Forward Academy gives Verzone the chance to interact with peers across the nation for the next two years. Verzone believes the Academy's focus on collaboration and problem solving will give him a deeper understanding of how to confront and develop solutions to the challenges facing local communities and educators.

"Being here in Alaska, we sometimes feel disconnected and overwhelmed with large obstacles facing education in rural and Alaska Native schools," Verzone says. "I am grateful and eager to be connected to a wider community of practitioners committed to transforming professional learning in schools."

LEARNING FORWARD CALENDAR

Dec. 1-5:	Learning Forward's 2012 Annual Conference in Boston, Mass.
Jan. 31, 2013:	Deadline for proposals to present at Learning Forward's 2013 Annual Conference in Dallas, Texas.
March 15, 2013:	Last day to apply to join the next cohort of Learning School Alliance schools.
March 15, 2013:	Last day to apply to join Academy Class of 2015.
July 21-24, 2013:	Learning Forward's 2013 Summer Conference in Minneapolis, Minn.

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STANDARDS ASSESSMENT INVENTORY 2

Student outcomes are the driving force behind professional learning decisions

Planning for effective professional learning proceeds in this sequence: What do students need to know and be able to do to achieve? Given that information, what knowledge and skills do educators need? Finally, what should professional learning address, and how should it be organized to ensure educators attain the necessary knowledge and skills?

However, too frequently, professional learning planning looks like this: Develop a needs assessment survey for educators to take, and organize professional learning according to the priorities that surface from the survey.

What is wrong with the second sequence? Some teachers may think they need to learn more about differentiated instruction, and some principals may think they need to learn more about schoolwide discipline strategies. But without first examining students' needs and identifying the related knowledge and skills staff need, selecting a professional learning focus can be arbitrary rather than deliberate.

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Stephanie Hirsh (stephanie.hirsh@ learningforward.org) is executive director of Learning Forward.

In the second sequence, planning begins with the educator. In the first sequence, planning begins with the student. In education, student success is our end goal.

I have a friend whose son works for a major manufacturing company. He boasts about his opportunity to go to culinary school as his professional development. Fortunately, he also participates in on-the-job training to support his role in the finance department. The money spent on his cooking classes has little to do with his company's profitability. The company explains its investment as an investment in the welfare of its employees.

I wish we had the option to prioritize the welfare of our employees as well as our students when it comes to professional development decisions. With increasingly fewer resources to support educators, we must make wise choices about how we spend them, driven by the outcomes we expect for our students.

The idea that professional learning planning begins with what students need to know and be able to do is so simple, but often neglected. Instead, school systems and professional development committees may defer to such things as results from needs assessments, individualized planning processes leading to independent requests for support, the next new thing that will be the answer to all ills, or the availability of speakers on a particular date.

Guided by such thinking, systems then decide to devote precious professional learning resources to:

- Team-building field trips rather than deep analysis of data;
- Course requirements rather than job-embedded collaborative learning;
- Stress management rather than subject-specific learning;
- External consultants rather than expertise that may reside within the school; and
- Fragmented individualized professional learning plans rather than team and schoolwide planning aligned to student and teacher data.

The Outcomes standard leaves no room for such choices. The purpose of professional learning is to ensure that all students successfully meet the standards determined necessary for their success. Educator performance standards establish the link to student standards. And professional development standards define the conditions and processes necessary to ensure that educators are able to acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they need.

In the early years of my career, professional development was touted as a professional benefit for me as an individual. Today, professional learning is a professional responsibility. Without a commitment to it, it is highly unlikely any school system, school, or individual will be able to help all students achieve rigorous standards. ■

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