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JSD

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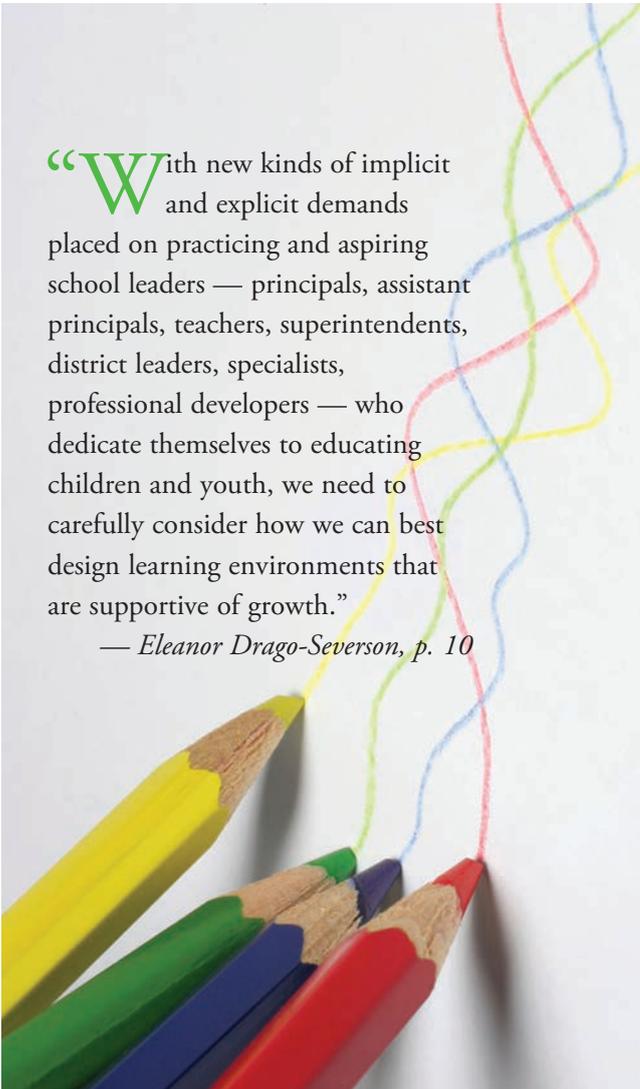
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BY STEPHANIE HIRSH



Take a walk behind the learners you lead

When she was principal at Roosevelt Elementary School in Spokane, Wash., Shari Farris decided to investigate the learning and discipline problems of the immigrant students in her school by learning all she could about one student's experiences in the school. She used a professional learning design called shadowing and spent the day following Yasir, a 3rd grader, observing in fine detail his routines and interactions. You can read her article



about the experience — “In Yasir’s shoes” — beginning on p. 20.

Walking in someone else’s shoes isn’t easy. What would it look like to walk in the shoes of the other learners in schools and school systems — the educators — as they experience the professional learning available to them? As the people responsible for

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

the educator learning in your context, consider what kinds of learning designs you would encounter if you had followed in the footsteps of your adult learners. Think about what levels of engagement and interaction you would see if you watched just one teacher or one school leader, perhaps one who you know struggles with their learning experiences. Presuming to understand another perspective can be dangerous, certainly, but consider what you might learn if you shed your preconceptions.

Take a walk behind the learners you lead — write down what you see. Who is engaged? What are the expectations of the facilitators or team leaders? How are the learners collaborating and contributing? Who enters the room prepared to learn? Who leaves the room motivated to dig deeper? Most importantly, what are the implications for those responsible for the professional learning?

Farris writes, “Empirical data falls short when trying to capture evidence of student disengagement, isolation, boredom, sadness, and frustration,” (p. 23). Does the empirical data you have about professional learning in your context take into account such critical elements of learning?

The Learning Designs standard — *Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes* — asks educators to be attentive to all such aspects of

learning. Not only must leaders of learning understand and address the many ways that adults learn, they must also take into account the goals that learners set, the goals of the school and school system, the resources available, and the content and design of learning. And, as with Yasir’s teachers and principal, learning leaders need to ensure that learners are actively engaged with the learning, that they have a voice in determining how and what they learn, and that they have opportunities to construct, discuss, reflect, analyze, and evaluate as they move to put their learning into practice.

Other articles in this issue explore an exciting range of designs for collaborative and individual learning, across schools, districts, and statewide. Start with Eleanor Drago-Severson’s reflections on adult learning (see p. 10), and consider her thoughts on the standard as you work your way through the learning strategies described in the rest of the issue. As always, learning starts with the end in mind, so goal setting is step one in planning learning. Read Stephanie Hirsh’s column on p. 68 on that topic, and use the tool on p. 55 to help in your own goal setting.

Finally, when you think about shadowing a learner, don’t forget yourself. What would someone following you observe? Be your own shadow. As a learner, the time you take to reflect upon and synthesize new ideas and approaches isn’t a luxury. It’s essential. ■

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COACHING WORKS

An Interaction-Based Approach to Enhancing Secondary School Instruction and Student Achievement

Science, August 19, 2011

Coaching middle and high school teachers to enhance the quality of their interactions with students leads to significant gains in students' end-of-school-year achievement test scores, according to a study by researchers at the University of Virginia. The study evaluates the effectiveness of a professional development portfolio for teachers called MyTeachingPartner-Secondary, or MTP-S, created by researchers at the university's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning. According to the study, improvements in teachers' interactions with students lead to substantial gains in high-stakes, state standardized tests.

www.sciencemag.org/content/333/6045/1034.full

BETTING ON TEACHERS

43rd Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools

Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup, September 2011

The results of this year's poll reaffirm Americans' trust in and respect for their local schools and teachers, but also reflect an increasing level of concern for our nation's schools as a whole. While a number of issues relate to how we ensure all students have access to the highest-quality education, including teachers, technology, charter schools, and more, what remains constant in all domains is the need for quality teaching and highly skilled teachers.

www.pdkintl.org/poll/index.htm



POLICY'S IMPACT

Teacher Participation in Content-Focused Professional Development & the Role of State Policy

Teachers College Record, Volume 113, No. 11, 2011

Analysis shows that school and state policy are more predictive of teacher participation in effective professional development in a high-stakes subject (math) than a low-stakes subject (science). In addition, alignment between state standards and assessments is a key attribute of policies that promote teacher participation in content-focused professional development in high-stakes subjects. The authors conclude that state- and school-level policies are more influential in high-stakes subjects. To encourage teachers to participate in effective professional development, they recommend states adopt policies that promote alignment between standards and assessments.

www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=16145

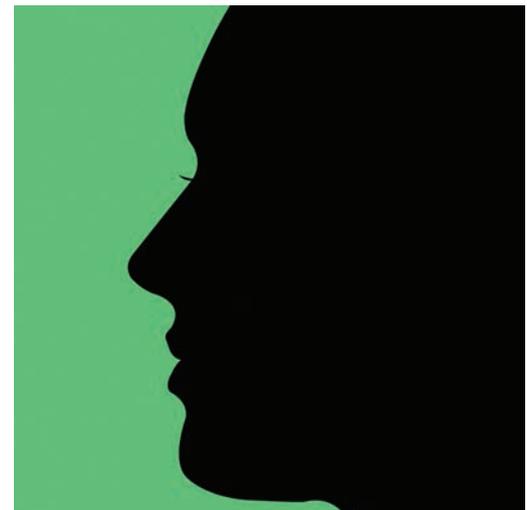
THE NEW FACE OF TEACHERS

Profile of Teachers in the U.S. 2011

National Center for Education Information, 2011

One-third of first-time public school teachers hired since 2005 attended an alternative to college campus-based teacher preparation. National Center for Education Information's survey findings illustrate differences between this population and their traditionally prepared peers, especially in attitudes about proposed school reform measures and ways to strengthen teaching. The findings also show similarities: Nearly all public school teachers strongly support firing incompetent teachers regardless of seniority, are generally satisfied with their jobs, think they are competent to teach, rate their teacher preparation programs highly, value working with colleagues, and plan to be teaching five years from now.

www.ncei.com



PERFORMANCE BONUSES

A Big Apple for Educators: New York City's Experiment with Schoolwide Performance Bonuses: Final Evaluation Report
RAND Corporation, 2011

RAND led an assessment of a three-year program designed to improve student performance through school-based financial incentives in New York City's high-needs public schools. Researchers examined student test scores; teacher, school staff, and administrator surveys; and interviews with administrators, staff members, program sponsors, and union and district officials. The researchers found that the program did not, by itself, improve student achievement, in part because conditions needed to motivate staff were not achieved and because of the high level of accountability pressure all the schools already faced.

www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1114.html

**TITLE I TRENDS**

State Test Score Trends Through 2008-09, Part 4: Is Achievement Improving and Are Gaps Narrowing for Title I Students?

Center on Education Policy, 2011



This report compares achievement trends since 2002 on state reading and math tests for Title I students and non-Title I students in 19 states.

Generally, achievement on state reading and math tests has improved for Title I students in most of the 19 states with comparable data. Further, gaps

between Title I participants and nonparticipants have also narrowed more often than they have widened since 2002, although trends were more positive at grades 8 and high school than at grade 4. Gaps between Title I and non-Title I students were often smaller than gaps between low-income and more affluent students, or between African-American and white students or Latino and white students.

www.cep-dc.org

SUMMER LEARNING

Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning
RAND Corporation, June 2011

Summer learning programs can prevent the loss of knowledge and skills that occurs over the summer for many students, especially low-income students. This RAND study, commissioned by The Wallace Foundation, provides evidence, identifies obstacles, and analyzes costs. Recommendations include: Make planning a year-round effort; start early to hire quality staff and recruit students; incorporate best practices from successful programs; establish partnerships; seek and support stable funding; and expand the research base on the long-term and cumulative effects of programs.

www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/summer-and-extended-learning-time/summer-learning/Pages/Making-Summer-Count-How-Summer-Programs-Can-Boost-Childrens-Learning.aspx

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CONNECTING THE STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

This is the first of seven tables showing key connections among all of the standards, in this first of seven special standards issues. The series continues in the February issue.

STANDARDS →	Learning Communities	Leadership	Resources
<p>QUESTIONS AND LINKS</p> <p><i>At right are questions that explore how the Learning Designs standard integrates with the other six standards.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do learning communities select learning designs that contribute to building collective responsibility while maintaining accountability and alignment? • Which learning designs support continuous improvement? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do leaders contribute to decisions about learning designs? • What are leaders expected to know about learning designs? • What types of support systems and structures are needed for the more frequently used learning designs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which learning designs require more resources? Fewer resources? • How can technology enhance learning designs to extend learning and results? • What resources exist within a school to support various learning designs?

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• DIGGING deeper into the standard	10
• TEAM designs	14, 24, 34, 38, 46
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LAY GROUNDWORK FOR TECHNOLOGY GOALS

“The cycle of professional learning for school teams in year one begins when they set a professional learning goal focused around technology. These goals drive the work of the teams for their first year and often provide the basis of the research they engage in during their second year. We’ve found that, initially, teams set goals that answer basic questions of technology function and use. However, as the year progresses, they are encouraged to revisit and revise their goals as their understanding grows. Many participants share that they initially don’t feel they have enough expertise to even know what goals they could set.”



Read more in “Teaching 2.0” on p. 34.

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As the introduction to the standards 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).

Data	Learning Designs	Implementation	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can data about educators, students, and systems contribute to the selection of learning designs? • What other data are helpful in selecting learning designs? • What data are useful to assess the effectiveness of selected learning designs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What factors are important to consider when selecting learning designs? • Which learning designs contribute to active engagement of learners? • What theories and principles about learning guide the selection of learning designs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What learning designs advance implementation? • How can selected learning designs be enhanced to integrate frequent constructive feedback? • Which learning designs are more appropriate for various stages of implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do designers of professional learning use performance standards and student learning outcomes as they design learning? • How can designers link past learning with current and future learning through their choice of learning designs?

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

12 PRINCIPLES OF ADULT LEARNING

Author and educator Jane Vella has outlined several principles essential to effective adult learning. A basic assumption for Vella in exploring these principles is that “adult learning is best achieved in dialogue” among adults who have enough expertise and experience to work productively with other adults (Vella, 2002, p. 3). The principles below are ways to establish and nurture such productive dialogues.

- Needs assessment:** Learners take part in deciding what they’ll learn and know that their skills and levels of expertise are recognized in learning design.
- Safety in the environment and the process:** Learners need a safe context for learning that includes respect and inclusion of the materials and strategies that will support them.
- Sound relationships between teacher and learner and among learners:** Learners experience respect as they learn in the company of others in a range of roles.
- Sequence of content and reinforcement:** Learners have opportunities to explore learning in a logical sequence and with repetition of concepts in a variety of interesting ways.
- Praxis:** Learners have opportunities to learn through action with reflection as an integral part of each task.
- Respect for learners as decision makers:** Learners have a voice in shaping their learning experiences.
- Ideas, feelings, and actions:** Learners attend to the cognitive, affective, and psychometric elements of what they are learning.
- Immediacy of the learning:** Learners immediately understand how what they are learning will make a difference to them.
- Clear roles and role development:** Learners determine what role to play to best suit their learning contexts and relationship building.
- Teamwork and use of small groups:** Learners work to collaborate with one another to share responsibility and strengthen learning.
- Engagement of the learners in what they are learning:** Learners actively participate in addressing the challenges and issues they are learning about.
- Accountability:** Learners know that they are learning what they intended to learn and they are accountable to one another about their learning.

Source: Vella, J. (2002). *Learning to listen, learning to teach: The power of dialogue in educating adults* (Rev. ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

HOW ADULTS LEARN

FORMS THE FOUNDATION OF THE LEARNING DESIGNS STANDARD

By Eleanor Drago-Severson

As we undertake the complex and compelling challenge of building capacity for all educators to meet the needs of all students, we know a few things for sure. The first is that supporting adult learning has a direct and positive influence on increasing student achievement. We know that not all professional learning initiatives — for example, strict content delivery, or what is often known as sit-and-get (Murnane & Willett, 2011) — have the same effect on student achievement. However, we also know that authentic professional learning, in which adults are learning and growing and experiencing as they participate, can make a tremendous difference for adults, children, schools, and school systems.

For these reasons and more, Learning Forward's new Learning Designs standard is an important reminder that shaping professional learning as opportunities for adults to learn and grow is essential and that our understanding of how adults learn is an essential component of this pressing goal. Doing this work — shaping learning and

growth-enhancing conditions in professional learning — will help us meet the adaptive challenges we encounter every day. This holds the promise of helping us to increase our personal and organizational capacities and resources. With new kinds of implicit and explicit demands placed on practicing and aspiring school leaders — principals, as-



Drago-Severson

stant principals, teachers, superintendents, district leaders, specialists, professional developers — who dedicate themselves to educating children and youth, we need to carefully consider how we can best design learning environments that are supportive of growth. I define growth as increases in our cognitive, emotional or affective, intrapersonal (the way the self relates to the self), and interpersonal (the way the self

relates to others) capacities to better manage leading, teaching, learning, and living.

More specifically, the three strands of the Learning



Designs standard — apply learning theories, research, and models; select learning designs; and promote active engagement (Learning Forward, 2011) — point toward the promise of crafting professional learning as learning labs (Drago-Severson, in press) in which educators learn about content, learn by engaging with each other, and learn from the process of learning itself.

APPLY LEARNING THEORIES, RESEARCH, AND MODELS

The first major idea in the Learning Designs standard focuses on the underlying beliefs and values that drive professional learning and the common features of robust learning environments that are informed by theories, research, and models. For example, the explanation of the standard names “active engagement, modeling, reflection, metacognition, application, feedback, ongoing support, and formative and summative assessment” as key components of many effective learning designs (Learning Forward, 2011).

These elements are all very important. As a developmental psychologist and teacher who has worked with K-12 educators as well as aspiring and practicing leaders in university settings, I have studied how people learn and grow for more than 20 years. My work is closely aligned with this standard in that both seek to create conditions that enhance learning and growth for adults with what I would call very different developmental orientations — that is, varied ways of interpreting their experiences and the differentiated kinds of supports and challenges they need to grow and learn. More specifically, constructive developmental theory (Kegan, 1982, 1994, 2000) and the pillar practices (Drago-Severson, 2004, 2009, in press) derived from my research inform my thinking about the common features of robust learning environments highlighted in this strand.

For example, one particularly powerful idea from constructive developmental theory is that we, as human beings, make sense of our learning experiences, life experiences, and the world in qualitatively different ways. Understanding that, as adults, we have different ways of knowing — or

ways of taking things in and putting them together in our minds — reminds us that we need a variety of pedagogical practices in any professional learning in order to adequately support and challenge adult learners who have different ways of understanding their experiences. What feels like a good fit pedagogically for one learner might feel overly challenging for another, so paying careful attention to differentiating the structures we create and the expectations we convey in designing learning can make a big difference for educators and for our schools. This strand emphasizes these important ideas as well.

Feedback, for example, is an important part of learning, as is the yearning that most of us have for ongoing support. The Learning Designs standard reminds us of the importance of differentiating the ways in which we offer feedback and support to adults with different ways of understanding and experiencing learning environments. It also helps us to be mindful of the need to integrate a diversity of pedagogical practices and processes to enhance learning to meet the needs of adults with different learning styles as well as developmental orientations, or what I call ways of knowing. Mentoring is a context in which a person is giving and receiving feedback, and part of the role of a mentor — from a developmental standpoint — is to offer appropriate support and challenge. The Learning Designs standard emphasizes the critical importance of this aspect of learning and growing.

SELECT LEARNING DESIGNS

The second strand of the Learning Designs standard reminds us of the importance of three fundamental ideas that are essential to building effective learning spaces:

1. Supporting adult learning and growth has a direct

LEARNING DESIGNS:

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes (Learning Forward, 2011).



- and positive connection to student outcomes;
2. Learning designs that invite adult learners to experience the processes they are learning about as they are learning about them are often most effective; and
 3. Making those processes clear and explicit helps adults implement them in practice.

These ideas resonate with what I've learned over the past two decades about the importance of "developmental intentionality" (meaning to shape learning considering the needs and input of the learner), modeling, and transparency for crafting professional learning initiatives as learning labs. My learning-oriented model (Drago-Severson, 2004, 2009) involves intentionally reframing practices we may already be familiar with — teaming, mentoring, collegial inquiry, and providing leadership roles — as spaces in and out of which adults with different ways of understanding their experiences can grow and learn.

Longitudinal research has shown that experiencing these practices and processes for learning and growth while in the process of learning about them serves as an important support to educator learning and growth and makes a positive and lasting influence on practice (Drago-Severson, Blum-DeStefano, & Asghar, in press). By looking beyond the delivery of specific content to the experiences and needs of learners, to the messages we convey directly and indirectly as the leaders and designers of learning, and to our collective hopes for the work we do together, we can more effectively shape professional learning as learning labs that support individual, school, and system growth, as well as raise student achievement.

PROMOTE ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

The third strand of the Learning Designs standard speaks to the importance of giving adults choice in their learning and to the power of working collaboratively with others. These are two ideas that match what I've learned through research and in workshops around the world from educators who serve schools and school systems in a variety of capacities. For instance, the strand's emphasis on the need to invite adults into processes of "discussion and dialogue, writing, demonstrations, inquiry, reflection, metacognition, co-construction of knowledge, practice with feedback, coaching, modeling, and problem solving" points to the promise and power of differentiation, and to the forward strides we can take — and *make* — when we commit to learning with, from, and for each other.

After all, it is not just the structures we create, but the experiences we design for adult learners that make a difference to their learning and growing when engaging in these learning enterprises. Attending carefully to developmental diversity — like all forms of diversity — is one important way that we can create environments of high support and challenge that can reach and inspire learners with different needs, learning preferences, and ways of knowing.

WE ARE ALL LEARNING DESIGNERS

The ideas presented in the new Learning Designs standard are imperative — and a call for even greater mindfulness — for all of us. I offer this because from my perspective, we are all learning designers. In working with colleagues, parents, and students, we are all mindful of the influence that design has on learning. Recognizing — as this standard emphasizes — that aligning our designs with what we know about the different ways adults learn, and how they learn best, holds great promise for the future of education.

Just as Learning Forward's decision to use the term "professional learning" is significant and inspiring, so too is the organization's commitment to sharing these new standards and ideas. Educators value professional learning that feels meaningful. Integrating theories, research, and models of human learning is a promising pathway for professional learning to achieve its intended outcomes and to open real possibilities for growth.

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LEARNING SEQUENCE MELDS DISJOINTED ACTIVITIES INTO A STREAMLINED STRUCTURE

By Colleen Broderick

It began with the challenge of focus and alignment, and a template for a work plan. Six of us were sitting around a dining room table. Dirty glasses and bowls emptied of nuts and chips were buried beneath unrolled butcher paper and coded surveys of teachers' suggestions for next steps. Our charge was to refine the school's professional development structures for the upcoming year. In reviewing staff feedback, we recognized many of our designs had fallen short in terms of meeting the staff's need for autonomy and differentiation for their own learning, as well as connecting the work we did as staff to improve

student learning. A clear question surfaced: How could we design professional development to empower the learning of individuals to serve the growth of an organization that was all about student success?

The leadership team at Mapleton Expeditionary School for the Arts (MESA) in Thornton, Colo., responded to this question with its version of a teaching and learning cycle. In our first year of implementation, we developed a cycle to achieve the commonalities of teachers' suggestions through four primary goals:

- To advance schoolwide implementation of a single structure that we invested in the previous year;
- To improve assessment to better understand instructional needs, our work plan focus;

- To align and link multiple professional learning designs that were in place; and
- To empower the learning needs and expertise on staff.

As a school designer responsible for supporting the school in implementing the Expeditionary learning model, I planned and facilitated professional learning aligned with school improvement plans and served as a curriculum coordinator and instructional coach. The teaching and learning cycle was the primary organizing structure to support this work across the school.

A SNAPSHOT OF STRUCTURES

When we introduced the teaching and learning cycle to staff, MESA had in place a number of key structures and routines. These structures included a six-week coaching cycle supported by an instructional mentor for all teachers, a routine of Looking at Student Work, and whole-staff Wednesday morning professional development. Previously, these pieces, although powerful, felt disconnected and sometimes frenetic, as well as driven by an agenda that was created at the administrator’s table. Instead of moving the staff forward together, these structures often created questions about priorities. The teaching and learning cycle served to link multiple learning designs to add depth and consistency to a shared dialogue grounded in student learning.

ANCHORING THE STAFF

GROUPING: Whole staff

LEARNING FORWARD’S STANDARD: Learning Communities

We discovered the previous year that, to leverage the work of the community, we needed to be clear about our direction by identifying and communicating the knowledge and skills that would be essential for teachers to accomplish our schoolwide goal around assessment. To reach this end, we opened the school year with a shared learning experience aligned to our schoolwide target: “I can use learning targets and quality assessments OF learning to access what my students know and are able to do.” The two-day, on-site institute provided an opportunity to frame our work together and create the conditions where teachers could use the learning communities embedded in the teaching and learning cycle structure. Through a series of short, focused workshops, teachers were introduced to the core templates and protocols that would serve our work throughout the year during our weekly 75-minute meetings. In addition to the protocols and templates, we provided strategies for facilitation and instilled a deep belief that everyone had the capacity to lead their teams. At the core of our learning was the role and design of learning targets in unit design. We accomplished two core tasks

by presenting the big picture of the year’s learning and by providing intentional planning time that aligned with the school’s goal. Teachers had the opportunity to self-assess against the schoolwide target and set individual goals for their coaching cycle, and they had the opportunity to set a four-week student achievement target informed by standardized data that would initiate the cycle.

WEEK 1: Adding to the toolbox

GROUPING: Small group, staff choice

LEARNING FORWARD’S STANDARDS: Learning Communities, Learning Designs

With their four-week achievement targets in hand, teachers used the first week of the cycle to dig into research to refine their instruction in ways that empowered them to respond to student needs based on data results. We learned that once teachers had a goal for their own growth and student learning, the transfer from staff room to classroom was more consistent. The four-week student achievement target, recorded on a template that prompted teachers to consider the skills and knowledge needed for a defined assessment task, gave me a snapshot of staff needs from which I would choose a number of texts for their learning. The first week was an opportunity for shared inquiry — to build the proverbial toolbox of instruction by drawing on colleagues’ thinking and expertise.

After a brief text walk, teachers would choose a text to investigate with colleagues. All the articles aligned with assessment for learning strategies, providing a snapshot of instructional practice that would move us towards our schoolwide goal. The groupings were rarely reflective of a single grade level or discipline, which generated good conversation across the school and provided an opportunity for teachers to serve their individual learning goals. I chose text not only for its content, but for its brevity and practicality as well. We all learned that 75 minutes, when crafted with care, was plenty of time to grow as an educator.

After reading the articles, teachers would use the three levels of text protocol to “call out” essential lines of the text and consider implications for practice. Since we used the protocol every week one of our cycles, we were able to appreciate a growing sense of grace of facilitation and depth of dialogue.

Mapleton Expeditionary School of the Arts

Thornton, Colo.

Grades: **7-12**

Enrollment: **542**

Staff: **33**

Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	43.9%
Black:	2.6%
Hispanic:	49.6%
Asian/Pacific Islander:	3.2%
Native American:	0.7%
Other:	0%

Limited English proficient: **28.4%**

Free/reduced lunch: **57.7%**

Special education: **9.6%**

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WEEK 2: [Midcourse correction](#)

GROUPING: Discipline-based teams

LEARNING FORWARD'S STANDARDS: Learning Communities, Data

With our goal under way and strategies in process, we designed the second week to analyze and respond to the two-week formative assessment data based on the four-week achievement goal. We were slowing the pace of schooling so teachers could determine if students were on track to demonstrate understanding toward the four-week achievement goal, and if not, what changes in instruction needed to happen to ensure students were successful. One teacher fondly called this week “triage.” It

One teacher fondly called the midcourse correction week “triage.”

was our opportunity to talk with teammates, to problem solve, and to share successful practices in order to build and critique lesson plans to support student success.

Building on a Looking at Student Work routine that we used the previous year, teachers analyzed a formative assessment task of one rotation of students in advance of Wednesday’s team time. Commonly, teach-

ers analyzed this rotation in collaboration with their instructional support point person or a teammate. Using the student work to prompt reflection, they tracked their thinking on a template, which included space to list the strengths of student understanding as well as weaknesses, ranging from missing information to misconceptions. In teams, again using a protocol to guide conversation and thinking, teachers shared their reflections and collectively problem solved instructional responses. Learning from the first week often took root in the resulting lesson plan. As a roving facilitator, I discovered this was one of the most powerful weeks within the cycle. At this time, colleagues came together to ensure that kids were learning, and a spirit of instructional innovation permeated our professional space.

WEEK 3: [Profiles of practice](#)

GROUPING: Grade-level teams

LEARNING FORWARD'S STANDARDS: Learning Communities, Learning Designs

So, now that we used time to monitor progress and design a lesson, teachers (eventually) embraced the opportunity to get feedback based on the implementation of their instructional response. Our original plan was based on the Japanese lesson study model, but in a small, public school where coverage was difficult and the content of lessons varied significantly from classroom to classroom, we decided to use video study. Observations the previous year highlighted the fact that the power is in the practice, not in the written plan.

Feedback from peers using a defined protocol was tied to the instructional goals linked to teacher and student achievement goals, and we used the workshop lesson design template that the staff developed the year before. Although the teams

gave feedback to one instructor, this was an opportunity for all staff to see models of instruction that may improve their practice. We intentionally grouped teachers in grade-level teams so they had access to each other’s routines in an effort to build more consistency across the grade level. Over the course of a year, there were enough rounds of the teaching and learning cycle that each teacher had the opportunity to present once.

WEEK 4: [Final assessment](#)

GROUPING: Grade-level teams, whole staff, discipline-based teams

LEARNING FORWARD'S STANDARD: Data

Rounding off the cycle was a double whammy. The fourth week served two purposes and included two sessions. The first goal was to communicate achievement results for the four-week achievement goal; the second was to determine the next four-week achievement goal that would set the cycle into motion again. Although most of the teaching and learning cycle work was designed to fit into a 75-minute block, we had an additional 50 minutes during our early release Wednesdays that we used to address other needs of our professional community. During the fourth week, we used all our professional development time to complete — and continue — the cycle.

In much the same way as the second week, teachers were expected to analyze a rotation of student work prior to meeting as a staff. Again, a template helped them to track their thinking to inform the dialogue with their teams. Their first goal as a team was to represent this grade-level achievement data on a simple data board that identified the achievement goal, the assessment, and a summary of achievement for each of their disciplines. This provided a quick snapshot of achievement across grade levels. This first round of reflection was team-based. What did they notice? Where did data suggest a need for interventions? Where did data suggest successful strategies we may be able to replicate in order to support students? Then, using a protocol that supported staff in reflecting on trends, staff analyzed the data results across all grade levels to investigate where students successfully mastered the target, taking similar team-based conversations schoolwide.

This week is also designed to set up the next round of the teaching and learning cycle. Shifting into discipline-based teams for the final 50 minutes, teachers revisited their curriculum plans to identify the next stage of instruction, clarify assessment tasks, and articulate the next four-week achievement goal.

Many clear lessons emerged from the implementation of the teaching and learning cycle design. Some we were prepared for, others were icing on the cake. The initial days that anchored the staff were crucial. Not only did the leadership team define a clear pathway for the school, the teachers defined an equally clear pathway for student learning. Without that time to plan thoroughly in advance, teachers would not have been able to leverage the time with colleagues in valuable ways. Ad-



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TEACHING AND LEARNING CYCLE FACILITATOR’S GUIDE AT A GLANCE

Stage	Facilitator considerations
Anchoring the staff	<p>Consider the schoolwide goal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What knowledge and skills do staff need to master? • How can we break these down into targets that can be supported and measured? • What learning experience can we provide to the whole staff to ground them in a shared goal? • What data can inform them of students’ needs, to engage them in the need to learn? • How will teachers use the foundational experience to inform planning and their own learning needs?
Week 1: Adding to the toolbox	<p>Consider staff learning needs based on unit planning and teacher goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What through-lines emerge from teachers’ planning documents and coaching plans? • What text will provide opportunity for transfer to practice? • How can the text align with the knowledge and skills staff need to master to the schoolwide goal? • What protocol will best support staff dialogue? • How will we support facilitation?
Week 2: Midcourse correction	<p>Consider student work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will we support teachers in choosing effective formative assessment data? • Where will the time come from for premeeting analysis? • What does evidence of learning look like? • How will we support facilitation? • How will we support/ensure transfer?
Week 3: Profiles of practice	<p>Consider teacher work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will we coordinate filming a lesson? • What space and tools will be available for small groups to view their colleague’s video during professional development time? • What segment of the lesson aligns with the instructional goal and provides an opportunity for rich feedback? • How will we support facilitation?
Week 4: Final assessment	<p>Consider the data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where will the time come from for premeeting analysis? • How will we support staff in compiling and representing data in effective ways? • What materials and resources do we need to build the data boards?

ditionally, the multiple grouping configurations led to a significant shift in culture. We had a good staff to begin with, but after the third round of the teaching and learning cycle, we noticed teachers were having instructional conversations with just about anybody who would listen. The shifting of groups built a true community of learners. The teaching and learning cycle was not without its hiccups, however, and we still don’t have an answer to some of the trickier conundrums. For example, the pacing of a four-week goal remains controversial on staff, and we questioned whether it drives more tests rather than an authentic continuum of assessment. In spite of this, we do know that our core learning designs were better with the teaching and learning cycle. We were able to sequence core designs to feed each other and provide the space for teachers to drive their learning. The teaching and learning cycle empowered us to use the learning of a community to benefit the success of kids. And kids did indeed benefit. As teachers sharpened their assessment dialogue, students became more precise in talking about their learning. Not only did students have more evidence in their portfolios to support learning reflections due to the clear assessment tasks that emerged from the cycle, but data from the Colorado Student Assessment Program highlighted an increase in proficiency in all 14 tests taken. MESA also continued to get 100% of student applicants accepted into college for the second year running, the first of Colorado’s public high schools to achieve such a feat.

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IN YASIR'S SHOES

A PRINCIPAL GAINS INSIGHT BY SHADOWING AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER STUDENT

By Shari Farris

As principal of Roosevelt Elementary School in Spokane, Wash., I started my Tuesday morning like many others — on the playground, where, as always, I greeted parents and students waiting for the morning bell to ring. That day, I was somewhat preoccupied by the task ahead of me. To gain deeper insight and solve problems related to the increase of discipline referrals for some of the immigrant students at Roosevelt, combined

with stagnant or declining state and classroom assessment scores for English language learners, I had planned to spend most of my day shadowing Yasir.

Yasir and his family moved to the U.S. from Afghanistan. Like many of the 43 immigrant students at Roosevelt, he and his family arrived in this country with few personal belongings but rich with anticipation of a better life. I had many opportunities to interact with Yasir's father. In addition to the phone calls and office visits to discuss Yasir's behavior, his father volunteers three hours a week in the front office at Roosevelt, making copies, preparing materials for teachers, and cutting art materials. The same

day he registered his sons for school at Roosevelt, Yasir's father filled out volunteer paperwork, explaining that he would like to work on his English skills while helping at the school. From interacting with Yasir's father, I learned that education is highly valued in his family, and they consider it an honor to attend an American school.

I wondered if there was more to Yasir's behavior issues and poor school performance than simply a lack of effort, classroom disruptions, and arguments on the playground. I had worked with teachers in the school on intervention efforts such as tutoring and detention for disruptive behavior. Having read about shadowing students as a way to gain insight into their school experiences, I decided to immerse myself in his routines, interactions, and relationships throughout a schoolday.

SETTING UP THE EXPERIENCE

My first step was to think through how to be a good learner as Yasir's shadow. As the morning bell rang, I quickly made my way to Yasir's 3rd-grade classroom. I carried a small notebook to write down thoughts and observations. At the top of the first page, I wrote my purpose and goals for this shadowing experience. In planning this experience, I had sought the advice of Yasir's teacher, Anne Bergman. Bergman readily agreed to my visit and shared her perspectives on the best strategies to make the visit meaningful but not intrusive. Because the students at Roosevelt were used to me walking through and visiting their classrooms, neither of us anticipated significant disruptions.

Before shadowing, I also interacted with Yasir, mostly at lunch recess, as well as when he landed in my office for being too aggressive in gym and spending too much time out of his seat in his general education classroom. I also called his father to explain what I was doing.

THE EXPERIENCE BEGINS

At 8 a.m., students entered the classroom, found their seats, and prepared for the entry task directions that were projected on a screen. I noticed that Yasir had a different folder of tasks to complete because he could not read the entry task on the screen. Yasir took out his folder and spent the next 15 minutes sharpening a pencil, tying his shoe, looking in his desk, peeling the paper off of crayons, and trying to talk to the student next to him. The teacher redirected him four times in that 15-minute period. While the teacher went over the entry task with the class, Yasir appeared to be completely disengaged.

Next, students were directed to transition into guided reading groups. They each had a plastic bag with books and a journal in them. Most students had typical 3rd-grade titles in their bag. A few students, however, had picture

books in their bag. The teacher told Yasir to focus on his folder, which had one book inside. I left my seat at the back of the room to interact with Yasir and noticed that his folder contained a small picture book with words next to the pictures. I got the book out and pointed to the pictures. He was able to say the words with fluency; however, he quickly put the book away after I left his seat.

At 10, the ELL instructor arrived at the door for pullout time. As his shadow, I followed Yasir upstairs to another room. Yasir immediately sat on the carpet in front of the counting chart with four children from other classrooms, including Yasir's 6th-grade brother. Students spent most of this period repeating back what the teacher said or choral counting. I learned that this was their math time.

During the next activity, Yasir had to be redirected twice. The students took turns holding the pointer and standing up front. The English teacher then took items out of a box and had the students repeat what they saw: "hat," "scarf," "pants." The rest of the time, students worked on books about themselves. I sat next to Yasir as he colored pictures he drew of his family. On the page entitled "Home," he drew two buildings. The teacher asked Yasir to share his pictures with the class. He explained the top picture was Afghanistan and the bottom one was the U.S. I then sat with some other students, while watching Yasir. Clearly distracted, he continuously poked his pencil at the boy sitting next to him.

At 11, it was time to return to the classroom, where the students were heading to gym class. The students entered the gym and ran a lap around the perimeter. Afterwards, the gym teacher instructed students to sit in a circle, and then led the students through the nutrition charts, asking each what they had for breakfast that day. Yasir did not respond, and he was not asked about his breakfast. Next, students received directions for the fitness stations that they would do that day. Yasir seemed to like the rope climb the best and responded with a big smile when the teacher clapped as he reached halfway and then came down. After 30 minutes, the students returned to the classroom.

Back in Bergman's class, students were directed to get out their writing journals and finish a story they had begun. Yasir was directed to get out the same folder from the morning entry time. He spent the next 45 minutes drawing on his folder, talking with others, sharpening his pencil,

Roosevelt Elementary School

Spokane, Wash.

Grades: **K-6**

Enrollment: **440**

Staff: **80**

Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	71.4%
Black:	5.7%
Hispanic:	7.9%
Asian/Pacific Islander:	10.9%
Native American:	3.4%
Other:	NA

Limited English proficient: **8.4%**

Free/reduced lunch: **60.9%**

Special education: **23.8%**

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and coloring on his papers. The teacher asked all students to join her at the carpet for a read-a-loud before lunch. Yasir sat on the outer edge and spent most of the time trying to attract the attention of other students. I observed that Yasir was not engaged with the story and was redirected twice by his teacher.

At lunch, I sat at the same table with Yasir, who talked and laughed with peers, then headed outside for recess. He spent all of his time in the four-square game and on several occasions became agitated when he was out and had to go to the end of the line and wait his turn again. It appeared that he did not understand the rules of the game. I could clearly see the look of frustration and anger on his face, and I felt frustrated, too. How was Yasir supposed to enjoy recess like other students if he spends the entire time frustrated and angry? From my years as a 3rd-grade teacher, I remembered that the rules for four square are often made up by the students and can change from day to day.

My shadowing experience concluded at the end of recess. I returned to my office and filled in my notes to keep track of what I wanted to remember.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

I had several insights from shadowing Yasir, which I intended to further investigate for accuracy and to help develop the school's professional development focus. I wanted to understand the implications of my experience on my leadership practice, overall delivery of services for students, and the motivational conditions for learning for Yasir and other students receiving language services.

First, it seemed clear to me that there was not enough being done to engage and motivate Yasir. I probed this assumption through reflection and discussion with other principals and teacher leaders. Allowing Yasir to disengage and receive perimeter instruction in his general education classroom seemed to exacerbate the problems he was having in school. I thought that Yasir's lack of achievement and engagement might not be related to his ability to learn, rather to inadequate opportunities to use his strengths, skills, and experiences, and to show success in unique ways.

A second point of concern as I reflected on conversations with Yasir's father was that in Afghanistan, Yasir was a good student. Although his lack of understanding English is clearly an obstacle, this may be exacerbated by limited positive opportunities for interaction with his peers and the teacher. When the gym teacher was asking students about their breakfast as part of the lesson on nutrition, Yasir was not asked, and he was allowed to disengage. Recalling information from a class on instructional renewal, I recalled that people who feel unsafe, unconnected, and disrespected are unlikely to be motivated to learn (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009, p. 2).

Thinking about Yasir's experiences on the playground, I wondered if he may need structured and supported play, some-

MAKE SHADOWING A PURPOSEFUL AND PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE FOR LEADERS

Often, principals and other school leaders would like to use shadowing as a strategy for solving problems of student learning but are unsure how to fit this practice into schedules that are already filled with observations, walk-throughs, and other classroom visit protocols. The key to successful and purposeful shadowing experiences begins first with establishing a clear purpose for the experience. What do you hope to learn by shadowing? How will you use what you have learned? The following tips may be useful:

- Research how others have used shadowing. Read articles about establishing the foundational trust with families that is necessary to implement shadowing experiences while remaining sensitive to any cultural implications (Baeder, 2010).
- Share your purpose, goals, and intentions with the teaching and support staff in your school. It is essential that they know that you are entering their classrooms for shadowing experiences as a learner, not an evaluator.
- Think about your evidence-gathering tool(s). Will you carry paper for note taking? Will you record your experience? How will you capture the verbal and nonverbal exchanges without intruding on the learning environment?
- Communicate with staff that this should be uninterrupted time. Principals are often called out of observations and meetings for various reasons. Be clear and enlist others in the logistics of the experience. The shadowing experience is best done in the normal flow of a student's day rather than broken up into chunks over several days.
- Partner with families to set up your experience. Seek permission from families, and clearly define your purpose and goals for the experience. Finally, close the loop with families regarding your visit. Debrief by offering all of the strengths you see with their daughter or son in the classroom setting, and allow them to ask questions (Ginsberg, in press).
- Share your experience with colleagues. It was not until I heard about the benefits of shadowing from another leader that I even considered the experience.
- Open this experience to teachers or support staff. Although the logistics may look different, the same outcomes (a deeper understanding of motivation and engagement) will result.

one to explain American games, and an opportunity for Yasir to teach peers Afghan children's games. To follow up, I suggested forming a playgroup with the counselor and carving out time in gym class so that he has an opportunity to learn American games, thinking this might decrease the likelihood of frustration on the playground.

From a professional learning stance, it seemed clear that classroom teachers need more opportunities to learn about ways to engage and motivate students who are learning English. Yasir's teachers, while concerned about his progress, had no observable framework that could guide their instructional repertoires. When instruction was ineffective, it was easy to resort to blaming students rather than probing their instructional decisions. With teachers as co-planners, I believe that professional learning will help teachers see for themselves how to adjust reading materials for more levels of challenge both in a learner's first language and in English. There are many students like Yasir who can read, even when they are not yet able to read in English. I would like to help teachers understand why it is important to strengthen students' first language while providing support for developing their English (Valdes, 1998). Providing students like Yasir with only a simple picture book will not engage, challenge, or help him sustain an interest in reading.

I made a note to seek out teachers to work with me on developing, with support from the ELL staff, ways to facilitate adult learning so that teachers can experience — through their own learning — the kind of learning they'll need to create for students. Ultimately, I hope that they will conduct their own research. For example, some clusters of teachers may want to collaborate on ways to understand how text in first languages can engage and empower students toward literacy achievement. Others may want to investigate the potential and design of playgroups that teach one traditional American playground game along with one traditional game from a student's first home. I also realized that teachers may also appreciate the opportunity to conduct their own shadowing experiences.

RETHINKING INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

This shadowing process taught me much about the experiences that students receiving ELL services have during their day at Roosevelt. As a principal, I had spent many hours observing teachers' instruction, examining curriculum and disaggregating data to try to make sense of assessment scores. However, shadowing offered an entirely new lens on learning. I found it to be more powerful than any other observational approach for understanding struggling learners. I learned things I could not have otherwise learned if I hadn't spent time as a learner in the seat of a student receiving ELL services. I now believe that as a leader, I can help teachers strengthen their instruction in new ways.

Finally, and especially important in an era where fiscal resources are limited, I believe that the lack of resources is not

the primary problem. While sharing my experience with colleagues, I pointed out my need to get smarter about 1) how I structure students' days; 2) paying attention to students' interactions with teachers, peers, and the instructional materials; and 3) asking questions about students' levels of engagement. Initially, my instinct was to proceed with urgent caution. I realized from experience that a different instructional focus has positive implications for all ELL students but presents a shift in philosophy. One next step will be to discuss with colleagues how to engage central office staff that work with or within ELL departments in shadowing.

RECIPROCAL LEARNING AND LEADING THROUGH SHADOWING

When seeking to understand how best to support and engage ELL students in general education classrooms, teachers and school leaders need to step outside of the confines of the data conversation. Shadowing a student gives great insight into engaging, motivating, and sustaining learners toward academic success and meaningful relationships. This idea is clearly communicated in *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning* by Lois Brown Easton. She describes shadowing as “experiential and, in the best of experiential learning, it is both cognitive and emotional” (p.197).

Shadowing students can have far-reaching implications for leaders beyond providing evidence to grapple with problems of practice and declining test scores. Additionally, the lens used in these experiences can serve as a catalyst for educators and leaders to consider how they can further use this strategy to examine the culture and climate of their schools and classrooms. As I did, other educators who have shadowed express how much students have taught them about the sense of belonging, engagement, and knowing that exists in their learning communities. Most children fail in school not because they lack the necessary cognitive skills, but because they feel detached, alienated, and isolated from others and from the educational process (Beck & Malley, 2003). Educators can gather evidence of the ways in which students are connected and feel a sense of belonging through shadowing events. Empirical data falls short when trying to capture evidence of student disengagement, isolation, boredom, sadness, and frustration.

RETURNING TO MY EXPERIENCE

One week after my shadowing experience, I found a few precious moments to sit alone in my office. In addition to what I learned from Yasir, I thought about my relationship with Yasir's father. I am grateful that I have a chance to interact with

Continued on p. 37

Shadowing students can have far-reaching implications for leaders beyond providing evidence to grapple with problems of practice and declining test scores.

IN DEMONSTRATION
CLASSROOMS, IT'S
**SHOW-
AND-
TELL**
EVERY DAY

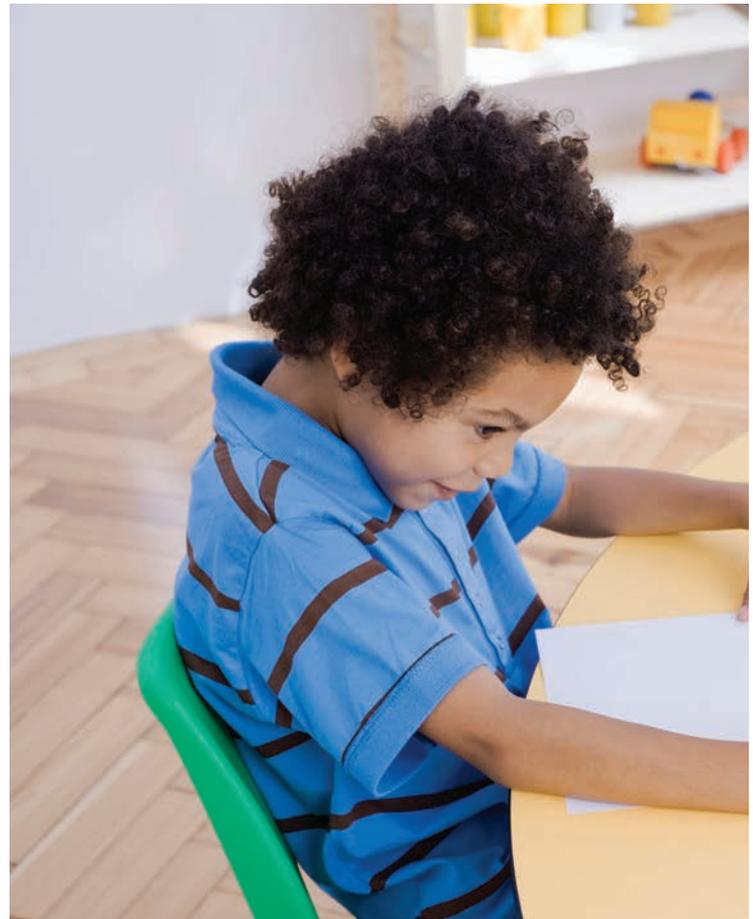
BY KAREN GROSE AND JIM STRACHAN

“So much professional development is all theory, but demonstration classrooms allow us to see the theory in practice, which is critical. As teachers, we rarely get to see other teachers at work. We may talk about teaching, but there’s a real value in seeing it. And the demo classroom is authentic and allows us to witness things that work and things that may not. The chance to have constructive collaboration and debriefing is so valuable.”

— Toronto teacher

“Direct observation of the professional practices of teachers by teachers must become the new foundation of professional development.”

— Reeves, 2008



Three years ago, the Toronto District School Board, the largest in Canada and the fourth-largest in North America, began to explore demonstration classrooms as a way to create a richer model of job-embedded, differentiated, and personalized professional learning. By doing action research and examining a variety of professional learning models from other districts, we chose a research-based model that fits the needs of a system serving students from 175 nationalities and speaking more than 80 languages. With the program in its third year of implementation, the Toronto District School Board hosts more than 380 demonstration classrooms representing every grade level, all subject areas, combined grades, half- and full-day kindergarten, single-gendered learning, targeted programming to support closing the achievement gap for English Language Learners, students taking grade 9 applied mathematics, racially marginalized students, and children with special needs.

The purpose of demonstration classrooms is to support



student achievement by building instructional excellence through the intentional sharing of knowledge and practice. Underlying this vision is a strong belief that all staff and students possess tremendous strengths and attributes.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING A DEMONSTRATION CLASSROOM VISIT

In her article “Power plays: Proven methods of professional learning pack a force” (2005), Lois Brown Easton says that powerful professional learning:

- Arises from and returns benefits to the real world of teaching and learning;
- Focuses on what is happening with learners (both student and adult) in the classroom, school, and district;
- Has collaborative aspects;
- Establishes a culture of quality; and
- Slows the pace of schooling, providing time for the inquiry and reflection that promote learning and application.

Easton’s work combined with Marzano’s instructional rounds research (Marzano, 2009) and Learning Forward’s

Standards for Professional Learning formed the basis of the design of the demonstration classroom learning model. Instead of spending a day discussing effective teaching practice in an environment isolated from the classroom and student learning, small groups of approximately six teachers are:

- Engaged in a guided and focused observation of a colleague who is teaching students in his or her classroom for the morning; and
- Actively participating in a collaborative debriefing session with the instructional guide and the demonstration classroom teacher to ask specific questions and share ideas and plan for the implementation of the observed effective teaching strategies with the support of the guide (coach or instructional leader) in their own classrooms.

For the participating teacher, each demonstration classroom experience includes the following core elements:

- **Orientation:** An opportunity to connect with the coach or instructional leader guiding the visit and share specific learning goals for the day.
- **Observation:** Focused observation and authentic professional learning in the actual classroom, guided by the coach or instructional leader.
- **Debriefing:** An opportunity to reflect on the classroom experience, ask questions, and share ideas with colleagues, the demonstration classroom teacher, and the coach or instructional leader.
- **Action planning:** A structured action planning process for applying the learning to participants’ specific teaching contexts.
- **Follow-up:** Direct assistance from a coach to support the implementation of new ideas and strategies back in their classrooms.

Toronto District School Board

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Number of schools: **558**

Enrollment: **250,000**

Staff: **33,000**

Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	31%
South Asian:	23%
East Asian:	17%
Black:	12%
Mixed:	7%
Middle Eastern:	5%
Southeast Asian:	4%
Latin American:	2%
Aboriginal:	0.2%

Main language other than English spoken in the home: **47%**

Students born outside of Canada: **26%**

Languages spoken: **80**

Special education: **17%**

Contact: **Karen Grose**, coordinating superintendent of program planning

Email: karen.grose@tdsb.on.ca

In 2009-11 registration data, we noted that a defining characteristic of demonstration classroom learning is colleagues with a vast range of experience and roles learning alongside each other. More than 45% of participants are beyond their first five years of teaching, speaking to the power of this approach to encourage intentional sharing of knowledge and practice for all educators.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

“I love these demonstration classrooms. For principals, it allows us to see best practice and how programs are implemented in other areas and classrooms beyond our school. I think it’s fantastic for the entire system.”

— Participating principal

All participants in the demonstration classrooms initiative receive an email message six to eight weeks after their session asking them to complete a short online survey about the impact of the demonstration classrooms on teaching practice and student learning. (See example at www.surveymonkey.com/s/TDSBDemo).

The chart below is a summary of responses from 1,752 participating teachers as of June 2011.

WHAT WE’VE LEARNED

Our data to date reveal a very high level of impact of demonstration classroom learning compared to the traditional work-

shop model, and the debriefing and action planning afternoon is slightly more meaningful than actual the classroom observation.

From our online data collection and feedback from focus groups of demonstration teachers, guides, and visiting teachers, we have summarized our lessons learned in these key areas:

- Personalization and authenticity;
- Importance of the guide;
- Learning of the demonstration teachers; and
- Our learning in leading this program.

PERSONALIZATION AND AUTHENTICITY

Demonstration classroom learning represents an approach to professional learning that is personal. Because we have more than 380 demonstration teachers, virtually any teacher can find a match to his or her current teaching assignment. That said, although all the visiting teachers may teach the same grade or subject, it is not uncommon for each of the visiting teachers to reveal different learning goals for the day during the goal-setting conversation with the guide.

One person may be focused on classroom management, another be interested in how the demonstration teacher structures his or her guided reading program, and still another may want to learn more about how the teacher fosters inclusion with the students. Demonstration classroom learning provides a venue for each participant to observe authentic teacher practice and student learning that aligns with his or her unique learning goals.

Even more powerful is what our data tell us about the im-

IMPACT ON TEACHING PRACTICE						
	Not meaningful	Somewhat meaningful	Meaningful	Very meaningful	Response average	% Meaningful + Very
Classroom observation	1%	5%	32%	62%	3.55	94%
Debriefing / Action planning	1%	2%	31%	66%	3.62	97%

IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING						
	Not meaningful	Somewhat meaningful	Meaningful	Very meaningful	Response average	% Meaningful + Very
Classroom observation	2%	10%	38%	50%	3.36	88%
Debriefing / Action planning	2%	9%	37%	52%	3.39	89%

EFFECTIVE TEACHING

The following chart reflects the collated ideas of central staff and demonstration teachers and highlights some of the key elements observable in Toronto District School Board demonstration classrooms.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING IS INCLUSIVE, INSTRUCTIONALLY PRECISE, ATTRIBUTES-BASED, AND LEARNING-FOCUSED.		
Big idea	What the teacher does	What it looks like
Inclusive	Fosters authentic connections with all students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcoming, safe, and caring environment where students feel free to take risks. • A sense of joy in the classroom. • Students feel cared for and valued. • Strong relationships are evident among teachers, students, community, colleagues, parents, and caregivers. • Mutual respect is a defining characteristic of the teacher-student relationship and student-student relationships.
Instructionally precise	Differentiates instructional practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relentless, intentional, high-yield strategies are used to reach all students. • Effective assessment practices for learning (ongoing teacher reflection, frequent monitoring of student progress, adjusting teaching and learning structures and content based on student input and data). • Open-ended learning tasks that require critical thinking are evident. • Flexibility of instructional strategies and structures based on student needs. • Students reflect about their abilities and learning and set goals for improvement. • Teachers collaborate and engage in ongoing, job-embedded professional learning to refine instructional practice.
Attributes-based	Purposefully seeks out of the strengths and attributes of all students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy using practices that reflect the social realities of students. • Focus is on the learner and understanding the learning strengths and needs of each student. • High expectations for all students. • Purposeful student collaboration. • Students make choices about their learning. • Learning is meaningful — connected to the students' real world.
Learning-focused environment	Uses classroom environment as a "second teacher."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anchor charts, student work samples, and other cuing and reinforcing strategies to scaffold and support student learning. • Responsibility for classroom environment and learning is shared between the teacher and students. • Students actively engaged in constructing knowledge and learning from and with each other in addition to the teacher. • Students use each other as resources to support their learning. • Information communications technologies are used as a learning tool to engage, support, extend and deepen learning.

portance of the debriefing and action planning component of the day. The morning observation serves as the raw material. As the afternoon progresses, the focus of the visiting teachers shifts away from what they saw to how they can apply their learning to their own teaching context. Visiting teachers report

implementing ideas from the observation and discussion the very next day with their students.

IMPORTANCE OF THE GUIDE

As part of this process, the demonstration classroom teacher

has a full-time job: to teach. The guide facilitates the entire day, from leading the goal-setting conversation and focusing observations to facilitating the action planning and follow-up support.

Demonstration visits without a guide can have what we call the “orange wallpaper” effect. Participants may like the day, enjoy being in someone else’s classroom, but leave with their next step being to use the same lovely orange wallpaper the demonstration teacher has on his or her bulletin board. In the Toronto District School Board, the guide is a centrally assigned teacher (e.g. instructional leader, coach, or special education consultant) who contributes both a strong knowledge of teaching and learning as well as the ability to facilitate meaningful debriefing and follow-up support for the visiting teachers.

LEARNING OF THE DEMONSTRATION TEACHERS

We asked the following question both online and in focus groups: *What impact did being a demonstration classroom teacher have on your own teaching practice and/or on the learning of your students?*

Of all the discoveries we have made in the past two years, this one is perhaps the most gratifying. While the role of the demonstration teacher is to model and provide learning for others, they report tremendous personal and professional growth as a result of their experiences.

- **Increased reflection on current practice:** “I developed a greater awareness of my personal teaching philosophy, a stronger desire to incorporate more varied learning strategies to reach my students.”
- **Fostered inspirational connections with colleagues:** “I highly valued opportunity to make new connections with other Toronto District School Board teachers and also to work closely with our math coach throughout the school year.”
- **Enhanced instructional practice:** “I take seriously the high-yield strategies in my own practice and, as a result of being a demonstration teacher, I reflected about how I could use them on a daily basis.”
- **Impacted student learning:** “The sharing of effective practices served to improve student learning in my own class-

room not just when visiting teachers came to visit but every other day, too.”

OUR LEARNING IN LEADING THIS PROGRAM

Serving our district in its journey toward a job-embedded, differentiated, and personalized professional learning model has been a rich learning experience. By analyzing the data and reflecting on the feedback from visiting teachers, guides, demonstration classroom teachers, students, principals, vice principals, and school superintendents, the district has collaboratively modified and augmented our demonstration classroom learning model throughout the implementation process.

As we have all experienced the phenomena of the same outstanding teachers holding multiple leadership roles within their schools, we set a maximum of three visits per year to any demonstration classroom with each of the dates selected by the demonstration teacher themselves.

We provide one release day for every demonstration classroom teacher to further his or her own professional learning and growth via orientation sessions, visits to other demonstration classrooms, and individual mentoring and planning of demonstration lessons with guides.

We have been very clear about the attributes and qualities we need to see reflected in the practice of teachers volunteering to be a demonstration classroom teacher. When names of potential demonstration teachers are forwarded to us from across the district, each identified teacher receives a personal visit to ensure they model the key elements outlined in effective teaching descriptors.

We have opened the opportunity for demonstration classroom visitation to all district staff, not just teachers. It is not uncommon for the visiting group of six staff to include a blend of support staff, teachers, principals, and superintendents who are learning from and with each other.

We have created an interactive, web-enabled DVD of video clips from demonstration classrooms to support the ongoing learning of all participants by enabling virtual classroom visits. Topics include assessment for learning, engaging students, gender-informed instruction, and effective use of nonfiction writing. Each clip comes with a viewing guide and direct links to relevant podcasts, webcasts, and resources.

Lastly, we have been inspired by the feedback from students in demonstration classrooms. Many have indicated that seeing teachers visit their classrooms and ask questions about their learning as part of their adult learning process has provided them a heightened awareness of the importance of lifelong learning for everyone.

“The teachers come into our classroom. They sit down, and they watch us learn, and they learn at the same time what we learn. It was a great experience!”

— Grade 10 student

EVOLUTION AND SCOPE OF DEMONSTRATION CLASSROOMS IN TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Demonstration classroom teachers	2 (pilot year)	288	384
Classroom visits	12	558	762
Visiting teachers	70	1,956	2,915

By opening our doors to each other, we continue to build this collaborative culture, where inclusion and divergent thinking are embedded, where effective and innovative teaching practices are shared, and where the personal and professional growth of all district staff directly translates into classroom practice and student success.

LOOKING AHEAD

Without fail, 21st-century student outcomes must become the cornerstone of student learning in every classroom. This will be a critical area of emphasis as we move forward as a system with the emerging design of our demonstration classroom program.

We recently opened our online course registration system and saw 14 pages of professional learning choices for teachers. We were gratified to see that 85% of these opportunities were fully booked demonstration classroom opportunities. We have ample evidence that authentic and personalized professional learning is flourishing within our district.

As we continue to expand this initiative, our goal is that

this intentional sharing of knowledge and practice transcends demonstration classrooms and occurs on a daily basis for every educator at every school and every learning site.

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**If you wanted to spend your days
tied to a desk, you would have
become an accountant instead
of a school administrator.**

**Learn How to Work Less, Produce More, and Still Get the
Job Done In a Sensible School Week with Malachi Pancoast -
The Breakthrough Coach.**

I made the decision to do all teacher appraisals and walk-throughs, (110+), myself this past year. Thanks to the training I received from TBC, I was able to spend many hours in classrooms and in productive coaching conversations every week. Our school received state recognition for programs implemented as a direct result of my coaching from the classroom level, rather than from behind my desk.

- Lisa Kersh, Principal, Plainview High School, Plainview, TX

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A STATE FOR EXCELLENCE

**NEW JERSEY
BOOSTS
LEARNING
POWER WITH
ONLINE VIDEO
RESOURCES**

By Victoria Duff, Wendy Sauer, and Sonia Caus Gleason

New Jersey has created policies and structures that prioritize collaborative professional development planning and implementation in every school and district. Teachers and administrators work together to understand the unique student learning needs that must be addressed within the school and the correlated professional learning needs of the adults.

The New Jersey Department of Education supports all districts with a tool kit of valuable resources for planning and creating collaborative learning structures that focus on getting results for all students. This tool kit was the basis for the creation of Learning Forward's *Becoming a Learning School* (2009).

The tool kit helps tremendously with the department's charge to support all schools in developing collaborative structures — even with limited capacity and shrinking



budgets. (See box at right.) But a tool kit can only go so far.

Educators clamor for pictures of leadership teams engaging in curriculum and assessment work and videos of teachers using effective instructional practices to invite higher levels of learning. Success at the Core, which launched in July 2010, seemed to be a perfect complement to the tool kit.

Success at the Core's draw lies in its video library of effective classroom practices and leadership teams that impact achievement. The videos aim to help educators create a new mental model — a way of picturing how practices can look in schools that have that have improved achievement over time, with at least one-third Title I eligible students. The videos tell a story of how effective practices evolve and how students, teachers, and administrators together enliven those practices.

The videos don't stand alone. They are scaffolded by a range of materials that encourage analysis, reflection, and taking action. (See box on p. 32.) The materials look at classroom practice (teacher development strategies) and schoolwide issues (leadership development modules) be-

A STRUCTURE FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

New Jersey's regulations on professional development for teachers provide a foundation for effective professional development planning and review at the county, district, and school level through the use of the New Jersey Professional Development Standards and a governance structure that promotes collaborative planning for professional development with teachers, administrators, and other key stakeholders. This structure includes:

- **Professional Teaching Standards Board:** A state-level, 19-member advisory committee of 10 teachers and other education stakeholders that advises the commissioner on policies and resources for the professional development for teachers requirement.
- **County professional development committee:** A 15-member board of seven teachers and other education stakeholders that reviews, provides feedback, and approves district professional development plans.
- **Local professional development committee:** A six-member committee of four teachers and two administrators that guides the district-level professional development planning process. The district uses district-level data and school goals to support effective professional development in and across schools, focusing on districtwide priorities.
- **School professional development committee:** A four-member committee in each school of three teachers and the principal that guides the school's professional development planning process. The school uses school-level data to identify key professional development needs.

cause schools must attend to both to impact achievement. This dual focus echoed the approach we advocated at the state level.

Using the teacher development materials, teachers were now able to view a lesson, understand how the lesson was developed based on the teacher's instructional plan, and practice looking at student work used in that lesson for

strengths and weaknesses in students' learning processes. They also benefitted from seeing and reading the featured teacher's reflection on his or her practice. MaryAnn Joseph of the New Jersey Department of Education, who works with National Board Certified Teacher candidates, has asked teachers to view teacher development videos to see models of best practices they could then use to enrich their own teaching. She's found that the videos catalyze conversation around specific aspects of effective practice and help illustrate NBCT standards.

The leadership development modules offered districts, whole school faculties, leadership teams, professional learning communities, grade-level teams, and vertical content teams real-time, collaborative professional learning around common priorities — assessment, curriculum, and leadership goals. In schools using Success at the Core tools, educators began to create a common focus for practice, long after our staff had taken leave.

John Coleman, director of curriculum for Toms River Regional Schools, used the common formative assessments module to build districtwide understanding of how common formative assessments improve teaching and learning. He first shared the module's multimedia presentation, facilitator guide, and handouts with all district administrators. Coleman then carved out time to help school leaders design customized professional learning experiences around common formative assessments for staff. The district shared module content at the school level with the district's

1,700 teachers during a September professional development day. School leaders report that the videos and supporting materials made the idea of developing common formative assessments seem real, doable, and desirable, and that the module's resources make the content easy to present.

In October 2010, the New Jersey Department of Education brought numerous education partners to view the tools embedded in Success at the Core and to practice using a leadership development module and a teacher development strategy. The partners — organizations across the state invested in the work of teacher quality — included the major education associations representing teachers, school leaders, and school board members; college faculty supporting preservice teachers; other education organizations that provide support for professional learning including the New Jersey affiliate of Learning Forward; parent groups; the New Jersey Department of Education divisions; and interested districts. The intensive opportunity to work with the tools equipped participants to navigate the site easily and challenged them to consider how to incorporate the tools in their own work. The design of the materials encouraged educators in a range of positions to use and adapt them according to individual and team needs. (See box on p. 33.)

The portable nature of Success at the Core, and the fact

Success at the Core materials are available free of charge to anyone who registers at www.successatthecore.com.

LEARNING DESIGNS USING VIDEO

Video of classroom instruction is a powerful medium for offering images of effective practice. But watching video, by itself, does not change practice. To be most effective, viewers must deepen their understanding of what they view and take away lessons that can improve practice. Here are design features to consider when crafting professional learning that incorporates video:

Pose reflective questions that support individual *and* group learning.

Before viewing:

- What are the norms to employ in viewing? (Think about norms used for classroom visitations.)
- What do you want to learn about?
- What school/district priorities and specific student needs motivate the viewing?

After viewing:

- What did you observe, as it relates to the goals and motivations you brought to the experience?
- What did you observe about teacher interactions with the students? Student interactions with other students?
- How is the room organized to support learning?

Provide materials that supplement the video.

- What artifacts of the observed work can support and supplement the learning from the video?
- What samples of student work from the filmed classroom, curriculum materials, and lesson plans can give a more textured understanding of the practice being observed?
- What activities help team members juxtapose what they saw in the video with their own reality?

Support group discussion and next steps.

- What key ideas do you take away individually and as a group from this video?
- How does the reality of the video contrast with the personal reality of the viewer and the reality of the school?
- So what? Then what?

that it is free, further extends the power of its flexible design. Since the session in October, a range of groups have started to use the resource to support work on a range of issues including: building capacity around data use and formative assessments,

DESIGN FEATURES THAT SUPPORT JOB-EMBEDDED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

By design, school-based educators guide their teams through Success at the Core's leadership development modules. Several online tools exist to support and build internal capacity.

24/7 availability: Because they are online, materials are available whenever teams have time. An Internet connection, projector, a printer for handouts, and a computer come together to support team learning.

Easily customized materials: The variety of research-based topics allows leaders to choose the materials that attend to local priorities and immediate professional learning needs as they arise. While modules last two to three hours, self-contained segments — with their specific goals, videos, readings, team self-assessments, and reflective materials — can be taken up to fit a team's available time.

Downloadable resources that build school-based

facilitator capacity: An overview helps facilitators consider the big picture: engaging colleagues in professional learning, eliciting the leaders' support, mapping out use of the materials in advance, and ensuring the desired outcomes take hold within the community.

Each module includes a detailed facilitator guide, agenda, and supporting handouts. The facilitator guide names what preparation can be done in advance, lays out how long each activity will take, predicts what issues may reveal themselves as the work ensues, and offers effective discussion and reflection protocols.

Multimedia presentation: To further assist the facilitator, a module's learning experience is laid out in a multimedia presentation — an online, PowerPoint-style presentation that includes the module's learning goals, handouts, discussion questions, and video in the order in which they are needed in the module. This projection becomes an organizer of the resources, as it lays out their relevance across the learning experience, and acts as a "co-facilitator," supporting teams to stay focused and on track.

developing a common vision of effective instructional practice, deepening the instructional focus of professional learning communities and other leadership teams, and expanding the resources coaches have in their repertoire.

The New Jersey experience to date matches up with the findings of last year's Success at the Core user survey, administered just three months after the materials were launched. According to survey results, those using the materials experienced:

- Greater knowledge of effective teaching practices;
 - More effective implementation of improvement agendas by team and teachers;
 - Gains in facilitation skills;
 - An increase in instructionally focused dialogue among teachers; and
 - More overall cohesiveness within a professional community.
- And as a result of team use over time, users expect to experience:
- Changes in colleagues' classroom practices;
 - Greater team commitment to improvement in instruction and achievement; and
 - Greater team capacity to improve instruction and achievement.

This early, powerful response is propelling the New Jersey Department of Education to find additional ways to help colleagues and partners across the state learn about and effectively use Success at the Core. The allure of professional learning delivered in an online environment is undeniable — accessible, just-in-time learning for teams and teachers as needs arise and

time allows. It is imperative, however, for online tools to also support what we know about effective professional development. Success at the Core marries the benefits of technology and Learning Forward's definition of professional development.

This marriage brings something old — professional learning that fosters a commitment to student learning — and something new — online tools with powerful videos that provide windows into effective classroom practice and leadership strategies; something borrowed — research on effective practices embedded in tools to support educators in developing collaborative structures — and something true — professional learning that builds capacity for all educators to support all students through sustained dialogue and collective action.

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Photo by MICHELLE BOURGEOIS

A team leader meeting at St. Vrain Valley School District includes, from left, Jenny Cloke, Susan Tatum, and Deb Stechman.

TEACHING 2.0

TEAMS KEEP TEACHERS AND STUDENTS PLUGGED INTO TECHNOLOGY

By Michelle Bourgeois and Bud Hunt

See if you recognize this scenario: A school receives a grant for equipment, maybe through the PTA or other school funds. The school purchases the equipment and places it in classrooms to increase student achievement. Someone from the technology department spends several hours (or with luck, a day) training teachers on which buttons to press to make the magic happen. But after a few months, the initial excitement wears off. Teachers are hesitant to use the equipment in class because they can't quite remember what to do. Updates or technical issues require additional

support or retraining.

Adding equipment often becomes a temporary distraction from the work of teaching and learning, rather than an opportunity to rethink instruction. And so, the equipment collects dust until the next new thing comes along.

With only two instructional technologists (we've since been joined by a third) serving a district of 1,800 teachers, one of the challenges we faced in the St. Vrain Valley School District in Longmont, Colo., was how to build capacity for change through self-efficacy. How could we build processes that help teachers become self-directed learners who can adapt to ever-changing technologies? More importantly, how could we move beyond the one-stop training that so often is the model for learning about

technology use? Might we move towards a model of professional development that prepares teachers for the thoughtful use of particular equipment today and also encourages continued exploration and learning when the next technology shift occurs?

As a result of these questions, we developed a new technology professional development program in our school district. Called the Digital Learning Collaborative, it is built on three things that we know about professional learning:

- Learning takes time — time to play and explore and analyze and reflect.
- Learning is a social process. We learn best together and with each other's help.
- Learning about technology should be embedded within sound instructional practices, but often it's not.

THE DIGITAL LEARNING COLLABORATIVE: AN OVERVIEW

The basic structure of the Digital Learning Collaborative centers around school-based teams. To apply, a school team leader completes an application and identifies three to five fellow school members who are willing to commit to the two-year program. (See application sample at: <http://blogs.stvrain.k12.co.us/instructionaltechnology/files/2010/09/dlc-app-all-schools.doc>.) The application is an open process, and any school that can fill and fund a team is open to apply and participate. All willing parties are accepted. No teacher is required to participate, but all are compensated for their participation. Teams are affordable, costing a school a few hundred dollars per teacher per year, less than is often spent for a one-day workshop from a visiting technologist or motivational speaker.

Each school team meets monthly to discuss and reflect on its progress and refine the learning and research goals the team has set. Monthly meetings also occur at the district level to give team leaders from schools across St. Vrain a chance to come together to refine their facilitation skills and to further their own learning. Currently, we have 15 participating teams in Cohort 1, which just finished a two-year commitment, and 45 teams in Cohort 2 that are beginning their second year of the program. Cohort 3's 26 teams kicked off their participation this fall. In all, more than 300 teachers, representing more than 15% of our teaching staff, are participating in a Digital Learning Collaborative team.

The Digital Learning Collaborative was deliberately named so that the three essential elements of the program remain at the forefront:

- **Digital.** While our work moves beyond technology into curriculum and student achievement, our priority is

to help teachers think through what it means to use digital tools in the classroom. The Digital Learning Collaborative is platform- and device-independent. While many of our teams are exploring traditional digital tools such as a laptop and projector, we also have teams devoted to exploring online tools such as blogs in a lab environment and the use of iPods as mobile devices for students. Teams of teachers are exploring interactive whiteboards, student response systems, collaborative writing environments, and many more technologies.

- **Learning.** The focus of the learning in the Digital Learning Collaborative is as much about process and adapting to change as it is about learning how to master a particular device. While classroom technology is ever-evolving, the process of learning how to thoughtfully integrate any new device or strategy into a classroom environment is a skill that will always be in demand. By developing an awareness in our participants of the continual learning needed for technology use, we hope to build better future use of whatever new device might come our way.

- **Collaborative.** Dunne, Nave, & Lewis have written that, in order for professional learning to impact classroom practice, it is best supported through small groups of colleagues working in teams where trust and collective support are high (2000). By requiring a team application, we ensure that participants have a group of committed and supportive colleagues within their building. In addition, the collaborative links built through the district Digital Learning Collaborative online community provide for sharing and collaboration beyond the walls of a single school. So we work together in small groups in our own schools, but also across schools.

The first year of the Digital Learning Collaborative focuses on giving teachers the time and collaborative structures to enhance each teacher's personal and professional learning about technology. The second year expands into applying what participants learn to their classrooms with the goal of improving students' learning experiences. Specifically, we ask participants to engage in teacher research around their learning about technology and its impact on student learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). In or-

St. Vrain Valley School District

Longmont, Colo.

Number of schools: **51**

Enrollment: **27,379**

Staff: **1,780** teachers, **97** administrators

Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	66.7%
Black:	1.3%
Hispanic:	27.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander:	3.9%
Native American:	0.8%
Other:	0%

Limited English proficient: **18%**

Languages spoken: **English,**

Spanish, Chinese, others

Free/reduced lunch: **32.7%**

Special education: **6.9%**

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org

der to ensure the learning remains at the forefront, the Digital Learning Collaborative includes many process elements designed to meet specific needs within the program.

**ELEMENT 1:
LEARNING TAKES TIME.**

What does it mean to be a learner? While we spend our days as educators helping our students become self-directed learners, we don't often apply that same lens to ourselves. Time simply doesn't allow for it, or so we believe. Linda Darling-Hammond and others have reminded us that we need to rethink our notion of professional development as a short-term, one-shot activity

The Digital Learning Collaborative was deliberately named so that the three essential elements of the program remain at the forefront.

and begin to develop sustained opportunities for communities of teachers to come together as learners (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). By giving teachers an opportunity to explore new practices in a community normed around constructive risk taking, the Digital Learning Collaborative provides teachers a safe environment for their own learning. A variety of diverse learning opportunities are built into the program to allow for the varied learning preferences of participating teachers.

At the start of the program, team leaders come together for two days of facilitation discussion, exploration, and learning co-led by staff from our Office of Professional Development. This initial learning opportunity gives an overview of our core suite of district digital communication tools and their uses, but is primarily an opportunity to provide team leaders with skills and resources necessary for facilitating a team of adult learners. Taking cues from the district's work with the Adaptive Schools (www.adaptiveschools.com) model, team leaders learn how to develop team norms, conduct productive team meetings, and anticipate what to expect when working with adults. With these skills in hand, leaders return to their schools to kick off their own teams.

The cycle of professional learning for school teams in year one begins when they set a professional learning goal focused around technology. These goals drive the work of the teams for their first year and often provide the basis of the research they engage in during their second year. We've found that, initially, teams set goals that answer basic questions of technology function and use. However, as the year progresses, they are encouraged to revisit and revise their goals as their understanding grows. Many participants share that they initially don't feel they have enough expertise to even know what goals they could set. To help in this arena, we require that participants complete a minimum of eight hours of professional development — courses in basic technology use and/or study teams on particular technologies and instructional strategies — to provide an overview of tools and resources available in the district.

By the middle of year one, we find that teams are moving out of learning the basic function and use of their selected digital tools and are ready to start exploring classroom use. While this occurs naturally even during their initial learning, we begin to guide this thinking through providing links to articles and online communities where teachers are sharing classroom ideas for digital tools.

By giving an opportunity for teams to come together as learners and by providing opportunities for inquiry and reflection, we build the needed skills that are required for year two's teacher research focus.

**ELEMENT 2:
LEARNING IS A SOCIAL PROCESS.**

Professional development often happens to teachers, rather than with them. A big component of the Digital Learning Collaborative program is providing spaces and structures to help participants make public their learning and to build a community of learners who come together in both a virtual and a physical space for support and conversation.

Through our monthly meetings with team leaders, we attempt to model that professional learners collectively set goals for their learning and then structure their time together to meet those goals. This took different forms in the two different cohorts engaged in the work. The first cohort set a common goal, a difficult task among 16 teacher leaders spread across 12 school sites. For the second cohort, we realized that we needed to be more actively differentiating the learning, so we helped the team leaders determine a number of possible learning goals and split the group accordingly.

In order to model and document the learning, we encourage participants to use a district-created template that guides learning about specific digital tools. This tool discovery protocol allows participants who may not have experience with a particular technology to structure their learning through the use of online resources and collegial expertise. (See template at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ICDxPpNiXpX8SbCGFtSA42IwbCTYiwMANem0MdxjA98/edit?hl=en&authkey=CP2Yn94P>.) These aren't meant to be all-inclusive documents, but rather to provide a simple frame for those who need help getting started in their learning. In addition, by sharing the final document through an in-district Google Apps for Education (free tools for online collaboration) implementation, participants have the opportunity to begin documenting learning for the benefit of others. We share what we're learning as we go to learn from each other.

Additional opportunities for conversation and reflection exist in an online forum we've set up for each cohort's use. Teachers use these discussion spaces to ask a range of questions, from procedural to exploratory, as well as to reflect on their learning and what they're experiencing throughout the work. Time for reflective writing and discussion is built into every face-to-face

meeting, but many teams also use these spaces to stay connected in between face-to-face meetings.

**ELEMENT 3:
LEARNING ABOUT TECHNOLOGY SHOULD BE EMBEDDED
IN SOUND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES.**

Too often, districts purchase additional equipment and bring it into classrooms — and that’s all; there’s no sustained support or learning. Many assume that the presence of more computers or an interactive whiteboard will lead to smarter children and better teaching. This couldn’t be further from the case. To ensure that this doesn’t occur, we’ve framed the second year around a teacher research process that requires teachers to approach their classrooms as inquirers seeking out the impact of technology on student instruction. Guiding questions for this work include:

- Are the technologies and practices we are exploring making a difference?
- What does that look like?
- How do we know?

Throughout the second year, teachers look at their classrooms with critical eyes, exploring the impact of their technology with their students as partners. As one team leader recently described, the impact of this teacher research work is that our teachers are re-examining their teaching practice and making adjustments as they work to be more thoughtful about their lessons and activities. The technology use is secondary to this examination — the critical stance helps us all to be better teachers. And, as we require that all participants “publish” their discoveries, their learning impacts the rest of our school district, as well as beyond.

Our final guiding assumption involves the quotation marks around the word “publishing.” Although traditional, print-based journals are still the most common genre that comes to

mind when educators hear the word publishing, teacher researchers in general, and the Digital Learning Collaborative in particular, take a more expansive view. In fact, more common genres include conference workshops, district meetings, and digital genres like blogs, tweets, and posts on other social networks.

Too often, teachers are given professional knowledge to consume and make sense of rather than draw from their own practice to generate and contribute to professional conversations about teaching and learning. In the Digital Learning Collaborative, we are hoping to change this through practices that foster professional learning and support other district learning processes.

In a learning organization, everyone should be learning. The Digital Learning Collaborative supports thoughtful and intentional learning for students and staff.

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In Yasir’s shoes

Continued from p. 23

him each week during his volunteer time, and I am going to continue to think about a comment he made when I shared my experience with him. Jokingly, he asked, “Perhaps Yasir can shadow you now?” My response: “I believe that is a great idea.”

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PAUSE, REWIND, REFLECT

**VIDEO CLUBS THROW
OPEN THE CLASSROOM
DOORS**

By Miriam Gamoran Sherin and Katherine A. Linsenmeier

Carl Witter’s Algebra I class is discussing a multiple choice problem involving percents. Standing at the overhead, Witter asks students to raise their hands to vote for the answer they think is correct. As they vote, students talk among themselves. Lakisha asks a friend, “Why are you raising your hand for that one?” Her friend explains, “It’s gotta be C.” Another student responds, “No way!” Across the room, Sonia calls out, “All I know is that it’s not A.” Shortly after, Lakisha looks at Witter and asks, “Are you trying to trick us?” The teacher smiles and laughs as he continues to count the raised hands. After Witter completes his tallies, he turns to the class. “Sonia had an interesting comment. Sonia, why are you so sure it’s not A?”

The classroom is a complex environment with many things happening at once, all of which the teacher must continuously monitor. In the example above, Witter tallies the students’ votes, trying to get a general sense of what the class understands about the problem. At the same time, he’s hearing students’ comments, listening for clues about how individuals understand the content. And through it all, he’s considering how to proceed with the day’s lesson. This would be a challenging task for any teacher,





and Witter is aware of that. In general, he feels like he does a good job of keeping track of what's happening in his classes. Yet Witter senses that there is probably more that he could do to try to pay attention to the really important things going on.

TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL VISION

In our work, we have been exploring the ways that teachers attend to and make sense of what is happening in their classrooms. To do so, we draw on the idea of professional vision — that members of any professional group learn to make sense of events that are significant for their occupation (Goodwin, 1994). For instance, when an archeologist stands at the site of an ancient ruin, patterns in the texture of rocks and sand typically stand out. Similarly, a meteorologist can recognize various shapes and colors within cloud formations. We believe the same is true for teachers: Teachers' professional vision involves being able to notice and interpret significant events that take place in a classroom. Professional vision helps the teacher decide where to focus attention and what interactions are most critical at the moment.

Despite the importance of teachers' professional vision, we find that teachers do not always have opportunities to reflect on and further develop their professional vision. During instruction, a student's comment or question typically demands an immediate response. It is not always realistic for the teacher to pause and consider a comment in depth. Similarly, in the moment of instruction, a teacher does not usually have time to carefully consider various options for how to proceed. He or she must make decisions quickly and continuously throughout the day. Teachers need a way to be able to step back and think about their professional vision without the immediate demands of instruction.

VIDEO CLUBS

For the past 15 years, we have explored how video

Developing one's professional vision involves focusing on the details of classroom interactions. Video clubs provide teachers with an opportunity to do just that. With video, a teacher can ignore certain aspects of instruction and pay attention to the lesson in a more narrow way.

clubs can be used to help develop teachers' professional vision (Sherin, 2000). As in a book club, participants in a video club come together around a common text — in this case, a video excerpt from a participating teacher's classroom. Typically, a group of teachers within a single school form a video club, meeting once or twice a month and taking turns bringing video clips to share with their colleagues. In some instances, a facilitator helps to guide the group's discussion; in other cases, teachers choose to proceed on their own.

In some ways, video seems like an obvious choice to support teachers' professional vision. Video offers a permanent record of what took place. Thus a teacher does not have to rely solely on memory to recall what occurred. Instead, video can serve as a window into a teacher's practice. Also, video does not demand a response from the viewer. With video, a student's question

Video offers a permanent record of what took place. Thus a teacher does not have to rely solely on memory to recall what occurred. Instead, video can serve as a window into a teacher's practice.

or comment can be a prompt for reflection rather than a call for action. Finally, in a video club, teachers have the opportunity to look inside each other's classrooms. This contrasts with many teachers' experiences of isolation. In fact, a colleague may notice aspects of instruction that the teacher in the video had not been aware of previously.

Still, the use of video does not guarantee that teachers in a video club will automatically explore their professional vision in productive ways. Using video effectively calls for close attention to the goals teachers bring to the task and to establishing shared norms for discussing video (Linsenmeier & Sherin, 2009; van Es, 2009). Thus, when Witter approached us with a desire to establish a video

club at his school, we offered the following guidelines. Each guideline reflects a particular approach to viewing video that we have found supports the development of teachers' professional vision (Sherin & van Es, 2009).

ATTEND TO THE EVIDENCE

When many teachers first look at video of their classes, they think about all the things they might have done or believe they should have said. For example, in response to viewing the lesson described above, Witter might have commented: "This is a pre-algebra topic that my students really need to understand. Do you think when I asked Sonia how she eliminated one answer, I distracted other students from thinking about how to get the correct answer?"

We think video is most powerful when practitioners take a different approach. Rather than wonder *what might have been*, we recommend that teachers focus on understanding *what did take place* in the video. Thus, we encouraged Witter and his colleagues to consider what the class learned from his focus on Sonia's elimination of answer A. In our experience, teachers

find value in this shift in focus. As one teacher explained, "At first, I kept thinking about how I should have asked a different question or why I didn't give another example. After a while, I saw that it was interesting to look at what I had done and what students had said. My lessons were interesting, if I just took the time to look."

ATTEND TO THE DETAILS

Developing one's professional vision involves focusing on the details of classroom interactions. Video clubs provide teachers with an opportunity to do just that. With video, a teacher can ignore certain aspects of instruction and pay attention to the lesson in a more narrow way. As one participant said: "As a teacher, you have to focus on everything. ... [In the video club] you don't have to be attentive to a hundred things. You can focus on two or three. It's a rare luxury." Even though many students were talking at once in Witter's class, reviewing the moment in a video club let Witter and his colleagues take the time to focus on each individual comment. They asked, "Why does Lakisha think it's a trick question?" and "Sonia can eliminate one answer, despite not knowing the correct answer. What does this say about her understanding of percents?"

In several video clubs that we have studied, teachers chose to focus their discussions on students' mathematical thinking. Teachers watched the video with an eye toward the mathematical ideas that students raised, they tried to make sense of these ideas, and at times they compared the ideas of different students (Sherin & Han, 2004). Teachers found this experience valuable.



POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF A VIDEO CLUB

- Provides common text to ground discussions of what takes place in classrooms.
- Offers space for sustained reflection on classroom interactions.
- Counters norm of privacy among teachers and promotes professional community.



GUIDELINES FOR VIDEO CLUBS

- Attend to the evidence: Focus on what did take place, not on what might have been.
- Attend to the details: Focus on specific aspects of classroom events (e.g. student thinking).
- Attend to what's typical: Focus on examples of everyday practice, not on exemplars.

Their comments included: “[It was so useful] to really think about student thinking. You don’t have that time in class. I don’t have that time in class. ... [Here] we reflect on it and actually see what they were saying.”

Also important is that this sense of looking closely at students’ thinking influenced the teachers’ instruction. Teachers responded: “[The video club] has helped me slow down my own thinking [in class.] ... I’m actually listening to what [students] are saying and responding to what they’re saying. ... I don’t just assume I know who’s got it.” Choosing a detailed perspective when viewing video can help to bring important features of one’s classroom into better focus.

ATTEND TO WHAT’S TYPICAL

Because teachers do not often have opportunities to share excerpts of teaching with peers, there may be a tendency to bring moments of best practice to the video club — a lesson that went particularly well, an explanation from the teacher that students grasped right away, a demonstration that went off without a hitch. While these are important and memorable for teachers, we think that it is more valuable to share excerpts of *typical* instruction in order to develop one’s professional vision. This includes moments when all did not go well, when students seem confused, or when a problem was misinterpreted by the teacher. Those are the moments that stretch one’s professional vision, that require one to reflect deeply on what took place in class and why. As one participant said, “It wouldn’t have worked to just show each other what was best. The value was in having something to talk about.”

Witter’s classroom video was a richer prompt for discussion

because it was not perfect. For example, as the lesson continued, Lakisha argued for an incorrect answer, and her explanation was difficult to understand. Discussing this in the video club required Witter and his colleagues to think hard about why students held different ideas about percent.

Teacher 1: “She found 1%, and then multiplied it by five, and then had to add it to the original amount.”

Teacher 2: “And maybe, was she was confused about .05? And thought it was 0.5?”

Witter: “She had sort of two methods up there on the board.”

Rather than provide an opportunity for teachers to simply agree that a lesson had gone well, typical moments of instruction — with all the complexity and uncertainty that is visible — provide a chance to think more deeply about classroom interactions.

For teachers exploring video clubs, these guidelines are a starting point for thinking about how to organize and focus discussions. As Witter explained following his experience in a video club: “The [video] doesn’t lie. ... It’s a really good way to look at your own practice ... to step back and learn to observe your own classroom. And then to have to talk about it among peers You’re definitely going to learn something.”

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Using video effectively calls for close attention to the goals teachers bring to the task and to establishing shared norms for discussing video.

FLYING SOLO

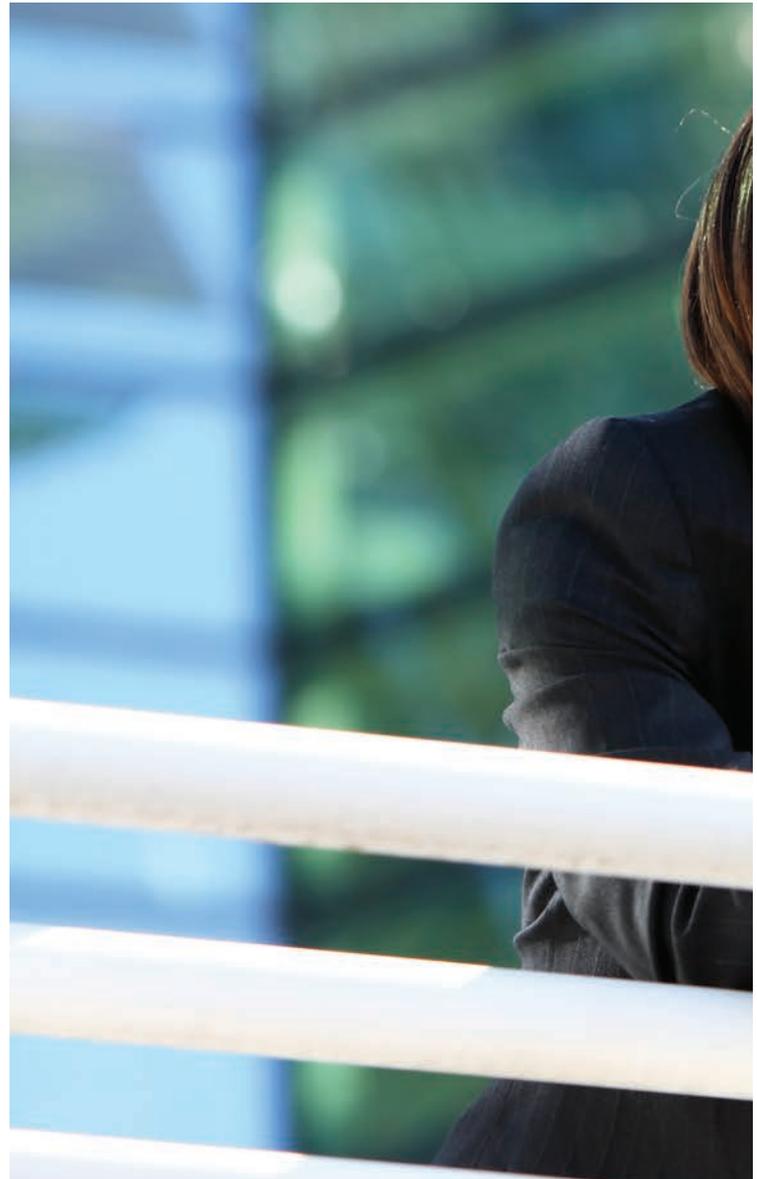
TEACHERS TAKE CHARGE OF THEIR LEARNING THROUGH SELF-STUDY RESEARCH

By Anastasia Samaras and Libbie Roberts

Change begins from the inside. As Daniel Pink (2009) says, intrinsic motivation and drive come from autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Successful reform efforts originate from the ground up. Teachers are growing increasingly frustrated with an educational system that they perceive they are powerless to change. However, teachers are not powerless: The one thing teachers know they can change is themselves. What might happen if teachers are asked to choose to study their own dilemmas of practice in an effort to close their students' achievement gaps?

While there has been much discussion about teacher quality and its importance, there has been little conversation about how teachers are motivated to improve the quality of their own practice in order to improve student learning. Teachers are, after all, the direct players, the ones we want to be highly qualified, the ones who are held responsible for improving student learning while attempting to address a flood of standards. How are teachers encouraged to take charge of their professional development to improve the quality of their teaching and close their own achievement gaps?

Teachers, like students, are motivated to learn about



things they care about and that matter to their lives. They are motivated about reforms that have instant applicability to their teaching and their students' learning. The best reforms may be initiated when teachers pose purposeful and applicable questions about their practice that empower a reform change in the first person. This cutting-edge paradigm is known as the self-study school of thought (Samaras & Freese 2006). Imagine if teachers were given these prompts:

1. What question do I most wonder about in my teaching practice?
2. What causes me to wonder about this question?
3. Why is this question important to me? What experiences and perspectives brought me to ask this question?
4. Who would benefit from addressing this question (e.g.



me, my students, my school, a school division, society at large)?

WHAT IS SELF-STUDY TEACHER RESEARCH?

Self-study teacher research is designed to encourage teachers to be agents of their own reform initiatives while working collaboratively with school colleagues. It has proven useful to an array of educators coming from multiple disciplines and programs (Kosnik, Beck, Freese, & Samaras 2006). In self-study, teachers critically examine their actions and the context of those actions as a way of developing a more consciously driven mode of professional activity, as contrasted with action based on habit, tradition, or impulse. Self-study allows teachers to plan, enact, and assess their pedagogical strategies with the support and critique of professional colleagues while examining the im-

part of their efforts on student learning. Although self-study is a recursive process, the following steps provide guidelines for teachers who are new to self-study research (Samaras, 2011).

HOW DO I PRACTICE SELF-STUDY RESEARCH?

STEP 1: Author your own question.

Self-study teachers initiate questions about their own practice, which they generate from observations of and personal experiences within their classrooms. The tensions teachers choose to examine are opportunities for professional growth and learning.

STEP 2: Work with a critical friends team.

Self-study requires critical collaborative inquiry. Self-study teachers work with critical friends in an intellectually safe and supportive community to improve their practice by making it explicit to themselves and to others through critical collaborative inquiries. Self-study is personal and interpersonal with learning, thinking, and knowing arising through collaboration and feedback from others. Working with colleagues helps extend and transform an individual's understanding. Critical friends encourage and solicit respectful questioning and divergent views to obtain alternative perspectives, and they work to help validate the quality and legitimacy of each other's claims.

STEP 3: Plan new pedagogies for improved learning.

The purpose of self-study is improved learning. Teachers must ask, "What is the value of this research to others?" This deliberate questioning leads to improved teaching to impact student learning. Improved learning includes teachers' understanding of what works and what doesn't work in their teaching. What if a teacher's research does not result in hoped-for outcomes? Teachers, like all learners, learn from their mistakes. In their research efforts, teachers are learning what works and what doesn't work, and that is progress.

A teacher's self-study project

STEP 1: Author your own question.

I teach 9th-grade English in a public high school with a diverse population of students from 42 countries who speak 34 languages.



Roberts

Ten percent of our students are enrolled in English for Speakers of Other Languages and 12% of our students are enrolled in special education. Overall, 25% of our students have limited English proficiency, and 39% of our students receive free or reduced lunch.

As part of the English 9 curriculum, students must write a formal research paper. Students engage in research constantly, but there is little resemblance between the research in their real lives and the formal research paper that my colleagues and I feel bound to teach by the state standards. I was interested in ways to make the unit and the paper more authentic to students' learning while still meeting the standards. In authoring my self-study question, I asked, "How can I design my instruction to assist students in gathering adequate information about their research topic to write a well-developed paper that is personally meaningful to them?"

STEP 2: Work with a critical friends team.

For the research project, I collaborated with two librarians from my school and two critical friends from my university class. Unexpected insights came out of our collaboration. With my col-

leagues, I revamped the assignment to make it more relevant to students' lives. We abandoned topics I had previously assigned to students and designed an open-choice assignment. We asked: What do people in the real world do when they want to learn about something? That is when we realized we had made the students' research experience less authentic, not only by mandating the topics, but by assigning the paper up front. We had also complicated the situation by teaching about plagiarism, citations, and note taking before allowing the students to browse, question, wonder, and research. We realized this approach caused students to dread rather than look forward to researching a topic. The students went into the library not to read and learn, but to find enough information to fill out the required number of note cards. Our theory that increasing student engagement and making the process more authentic would result in better papers proved true, and my students had more success than they had before with research papers. The process of engaging with other teachers in critical inquiry allowed me to discover solutions I would not have arrived at on my own.

STEP 3: Plan new pedagogies for improved learning.

My efforts resulted in meaningful student research and greater motivation, particularly for students who struggled to take ownership of their learning. My students' improved work gave me tangible proof that it is possible to teach state standards in a manner that allows for student choice and creativity. It does not have to be one or the other. I am excited to go back to the drawing board and look at other ways that I can reignite my teaching by emphasizing student choice. The process of engaging in self-study has reconfirmed the value of taking time to reflect on my teaching and to actively seek solutions and alternative ideas. During this process,

STEP 4: Enact, document, and assess your research process.

Self-study requires a transparent research process that clearly and accurately documents the process through dialogue and critique with colleagues. It necessitates that teachers are open to outside views, questions, and critique. Self-study teachers strive to make their practice explicit to themselves, as well as to others. Critical friends who ask probing questions and offer alternative perspectives and interpretations enhance the transparency of the research process.

Making a study public allows it to be available for review and critique.

STEP 5: Generate and share what you learned.

Self-study research generates knowledge that is made public through presentation and publication. Making a study public

allows it to be available for review and critique. It contributes to the accumulation of pedagogical, content, and issue-based knowledge and serves to build validation across related work.

WHAT DOES SELF-STUDY LOOK LIKE?

The five steps of self-study teacher research can make a difference in learning. See the article above for an example of self-study research in action. Explore excerpts from one teacher's project to understand the five steps of a successful study and to see evidence that the self-study teacher research resulted in reformed instruction that in turn benefited students.

WHO BENEFITS?

What is the value of a self-study like the one described here

I was my own critic, and, as a result, I have a new understanding of the value and professional ethics of consciously examining my teaching practices.

STEP 4: Enact, document, and assess your research process.

I used various pedagogical strategies to tap into my students' research interests. I surveyed the students, asked them to share their ideas with their class peers, and provided time for them to research subtopics to help them focus on a question. My multiple and varied data sources included 11 data collection instruments: student interest survey; brainstorming activities; teacher reflective journal entries; reading days; time samples; critical friends memos; student surveys after reading days; student outlines; student note cards; librarian questionnaire; and observations using the librarian questionnaire. Each data instrument offered me a way to better see students' learning needs.

STEP 5: Generate and share what you learned.

I was convinced that the changes I made in teaching this 9th-grade research unit resulted in more meaningful learning for my students. My students were able to master all of the essential state-required skills more easily than in years past. As I went into to this project, I was aware that my method of teaching the research unit did not align with my values of a student-centered classroom. Now I have introduced student choice and provided opportunities for students to conduct authentic research.

The motivation and success of my students during a unit that admittedly has little resemblance to real-life research adds further evidence that student choice facilitates learning. An important aspect of authentic learning is making the reading and research in our classes relevant to our students' lives and experiences. If we do

that, our students will agree to learn things they perceive as less valuable, like putting the period after the parenthesis.

IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING

After several weeks of brainstorming, journaling, and conferencing, students had decided on their topics and were looking for their first book source. A new student, Diane, was suddenly transferred into my class. She is a 20-year-old Latino student coming to English 9 from the ESOL program. She is also the mother of a 2-year-old daughter. I was a bit distressed to discover her sudden transfer, not because I did not welcome her, but rather because it was the last period of the day in the middle of a challenging situation. As I was getting the other students started, I quickly summarized the project for her. I said, "Look, we're going to be doing research on something that interests us. So, while the students are looking for their books today, I want you to sit down and make a list of everything you think you may want to learn about. What would you like to learn to do?"

Later in the period, after the students had found books and settled down to read, I checked in with Diane. I was amazed to see that her paper was covered. She had a long list of things she wanted to learn about, and she had two themes: How to do well in school and graduate, and how to be a good mom. She decided to investigate how to be a good mom. We went to the online catalog, she typed in her topic, and within minutes, she was browsing the shelves. I was struck by how different this experience would have been for her last year, when she would have been sitting at the table with note cards answering questions about an assigned topic that had nothing to do with her life and would in no way benefit her daughter.

— Libbie Roberts

for teachers and students? Who benefits from addressing this question? Often the questions teachers raise challenge their own ways of doing things. In turn, that classroom questioning is set within the larger context of their school. Not only did the teacher reframe her thinking about student choice in a writing assignment, but she rethought her attitude about students' abilities. Her students are more interested in writing, and her colleagues are curious about implementing similar pedagogies in their classrooms. On an individual and collective level, teachers can generate new practices that improve their professional development and contribute to the knowledge base of quality in teaching. Those new practices can be generated through the self-study process.

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GRASSROOTS GROWTH

THE EVOLUTION OF A
TEACHER STUDY GROUP

By Dana Maloney, Terry Moore, and Monica Taylor

Four years ago, a group of teachers lingered after a district meeting, sharing a conversation about encouraging social responsibility in our affluent school district of Tenafly, N.J. That conversation led to the eventual formation of a teacher study group, a grassroots professional learning community that

has impacted its members and the school district. None of us knew how we would change as a result of our involvement in the teacher study group nor how our group would evolve, but all remark on what a difference the group has made in our professional lives. Participation breathed new life and energy into our careers, strengthened our commitment to social responsibility, and helped us grow as

leaders within and beyond our school district. The group members' experiences offer some lessons about organic professional development and the role of teacher leaders within and beyond traditional district roles.

HOW THE GROUP BEGAN

Dana Maloney, a high school English teacher with 18 years of experience, Terry Moore, a 3rd-grade teacher with 25 years of experience, and Julie DiGiacomo, a staff developer who recently joined the district, shared a common interest in social responsibility, along with a curiosity about the extent to which social responsibility could be encouraged through curriculum in our affluent, highly successful suburban district located just eight miles from Manhattan. Through our connections to the Montclair State University Network for Educational Renewal (MSUNER) we approached Monica Taylor from the Department of Curriculum and Teaching. Taylor agreed to work with our group because of her interest in teacher study groups and social justice. The MSUNER fosters a reciprocal partnership between 26 school districts in New Jersey and Montclair State University through which school members become clinical faculty and participate in an array of professional development. MSUNER offers 10 hours of consultation by a university faculty member as well as funding to organize and support an annual teacher study group.

Hoping to attract others in the district, we received funding from the Tenafly administration as well as 10 hours of consultation from Taylor for a summer workshop on social responsibility. The summer workshop drew 20 participants, including classroom teachers from all levels as well as social workers, a school psychologist, a staff developer, a school nurse, a student assistance coordinator, and guidance counselors. Many of the participants had worked in the district for a decade or more but had never been in a cross-grade workshop, let alone one that included educators working in many different capacities.

Over two days, participants attempted to define social responsibility in a school district and heightened their awareness of it through discussions and exercises. As the workshop ended, participants sat in a circle and offered thoughts on how they might infuse social responsibility into their work during the coming school year. From this discussion came the idea of continuing to meet across the school year as a teacher study group.

TEACHER STUDY GROUPS

Teacher study groups address many of the challenges raised by traditional professional development. Some of these challenges include “the lack of long-term, continuing professional development that enables teachers to establish their own agenda” as well as “the deficit view of teachers

and change that underlies most efforts at curriculum reform and professional development” (Birchak et al., 1998). Most importantly, the research demonstrates that curriculum reform fails if teachers do not have the opportunity to define their own questions, construct knowledge, and renew themselves and their practices (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990; Fullan, 1993; Lieberman & Miller, 2004).

Teachers need time to dialogue and reflect on their teaching beliefs and practices. MSUNER has had a long tradition of funding teacher study groups because of its understanding that true sustainable change and renewal come from within schools and classrooms by teachers, not from outside or above initiatives.

Involvement in a teacher study group allows opportunities for teachers to act as true teacher leaders in their schools and professional communities. They can act as “catalysts for change” who are “never content with the status quo but rather always looking for a better way” (Harrison & Killion, 2007; Larner, 2004). Additionally, in order to be effective teachers, they must participate in the process of learning. As Roland Barth writes, “In order to create communities of learners, teachers must model for students the most important enterprise of the schoolhouse — learning,” (Barth, 2001).

The structure of a teacher study group is unique. It is neither a staff meeting, where school policy and business are discussed, nor a workshop session, where an educator from the school or university shares theoretical and practical ideas. As Barb Birchak and others explain, a teacher study group “requires voluntary commitment; builds community and caring; challenges our thinking as educators; and integrates theory and practice” (Birchak et al., 1998).

The goals for our social responsibility study group are aligned with much of the current research on teacher study groups. We believe that participation in the group pushes all members to increase the ways in which they promote social responsibility in their lives, classrooms, and schools.

HOW TO ORGANIZE A TEACHER STUDY GROUP

- Begin with an interest that might be shared by others in a district — not just teachers.
- Put out a call to locate people who share this interest.
- Until you ask, you don't know who's out there with common interests. You also don't know who would be willing to commit.
- Begin with a summer workshop or perhaps time during a district professional day; a district could provide seed money to grow a study group.
- To sustain the study group, seek grants from supporting organizations, such as a district foundation or a partner university. These funds can pay for reading materials.
- Give members ownership; don't impose on the group.
- Take one step at a time and see where it goes. Allow for organic change. Some people will come and go; new members will join.

We hope that the group serves as a safe professional community where dialogue is not limited by the presence of administrators. We strive to create a space where members personally explore ideas, make connections between theory and practice, and create new curricula, and safely try and reflect on new instructional practices (Coia & Taylor, 2003, 2007; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Lieberman, 1996) Ultimately, we hope that participation in the group results in an enhanced “sense of professionalism” (Birchak et al., 1998).

GROUP FORMAT AND PROCESS

For the past four years, the social responsibility study group has been an active, teacher-led learning community. This group includes teachers from all levels, as well as school social workers, guidance counselors, a school psychologist, and a student assistance coordinator. Once a month, the group members gather for an hour or more to share updates and discuss ideas related

LESSONS WE HAVE LEARNED

- The best professional development is not imposed; it is based on teacher interests and offers teachers ownership of their development. The organic quality of self-selected groups promotes choice, commitment, and peer collaboration.
- Don't limit membership in study groups to educators working in a certain area or level. Study groups can bring unforeseen collaborations.
- Study groups can allow educators to take on leadership roles and to grow as leaders.

to their inquiry. Our discussions are often based in and/or spring from shared readings. Between meetings, the facilitators communicate to members via e-mail.

Through our four-year process, the social responsibility study group realized that our students could potentially cultivate a commitment to social responsibility through a progressive continuum of engagements. These engagements could include fundraising, inquiry and research into a problem or issue, and personal, group, or legislative action. This continuum became a template for our professional and personal lives, and we aspired the following year to

not only teach our students through this series of engagements but to actually live them personally. We have moved through different stages of professional development. In the first year, we collected data to determine what we were already doing to promote social responsibility. In our second year, we refocused our lens inward to embark on a personal inquiry to discover what social responsibility means to us as individuals. In our third year, we are organizing larger endeavors that impact parents, curriculum, and policy in our district.

GROUP ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Our group has received grants from MSUNER each year.

During the 2007-08 school year, a large portion of funds were used to publish a newsletter; in more recent years, we purchased books and classroom posters for teachers and established a traveling library on social responsibility for district staff members. Some titles include Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Madeline Levine's *The Price of Privilege*. We have presented on our work for the past four years at MSUNER summer conferences at Montclair State University, and in 2010 at the National Council of Teachers of English Convention. The study group has also developed a district presence, offering professional development and resources to district staff members. In 2010 we worked with community members to plan a reading of *The Price of Privilege*, where we engaged community members in questions about the role of social responsibility in students' lives and in school curriculum.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

Those who participated in the study group report have all felt its impact. Each member noted that the group was able to serve his or her needs, serving participants at different career stages with varying levels of prior involvement with social responsibility.

INITIATION

For some of the members, the social responsibility study group was their introduction to social responsibility. The group provided a safe way to begin to think about social responsibility and ways to promote it among students. Janet Gould, a substance abuse counselor who co-teaches two sections of a peer mediators class, says of the group: “More than anything, it has given me an awareness of issues that I might not have delved into and, although at times you don't see the actual result right away, that awareness shapes everything you do and think.”

Other members remark that examining social responsibility as school faculty has led them to also examine their own personal commitments to social responsibility, which then translates to their work with students. School psychologist Nicole Levine explains: “Since joining the social responsibility study group, I have a greater consciousness of the things I can do to be more socially responsible in my own life and in working with students. Making a contribution, however small, enhances one's sense of self and connects us with our community and the world at large. Remembering that even a seemingly small and simple action can make a difference in the world is important to me and I try to communicate this to the students I work with.”

Similarly, Jamie Kagan-Heit, a high school social worker, discussed the dual nature of her investigation: “I have been positively impacted and influenced by the group. I am much more mindful of socially responsible things in my life as well as in my work with students. I find myself wanting to be more socially responsible and wanting to promote that in the school environment. I find now I work harder at doing more to give

back. I also try to empower the students on these topics and point out all the good they are doing and what else they can do to be socially responsible.”

MOVING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Before the study group was formed, Moore had already been a social activist, both in and out of the classroom. From 2002 until his retirement in 2010, he was advisor to World Improvement by Tenafly Students, or WITS, a philanthropic/activist after-school club for students in grades 3-5, which was featured twice in fall and summer 2009 on “Classroom Close-Up,” a news segment on the New Jersey Network. He explains that the group helped him “decide to take it up a notch, both inside my classroom and outside with my after-school activist club.” For example, WITS learned of a bill in the New Jersey House, sponsored by Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri Huttle, that would provide more substantial fines to toy manufacturers who produce unsafe toys. After further research into toys, WITS members reached out to other groups and took an active role in the legislative process, sending postcards to their representatives and visiting the State House in Trenton.

Despite his activist experience, Moore’s study group experience inspired him to take bigger roles in impacting curriculum and policy by working with DiGiacomo to fine-tune socially responsible curriculum and spread it across the district. He now offers professional development to teachers in other districts.

AT A PROFESSIONAL CROSSROADS

Maloney was reaching a critical point in her career when she teamed with Moore and DiGiacomo to start the group. Having spent a year in a central office teacher leadership position that had been cut from the budget, Maloney would be returning to the classroom and was concerned about how she could continue to grow professionally.

Maloney promised the group at the first summer workshop that she would try to integrate real-world problem solving into her teaching of a senior English course. She had no idea how she would accomplish this goal, but her participation in the summer workshop had only heightened her thinking that active social responsibility should be part of the 21st-century classroom. Maloney designed an inquiry-and-action model for real-world problem solving, one that uses works of literature as lenses into problems in the world. In their second semester, students design and implement action projects that allow them to use digital literacies to solve problems. In November 2008, Maloney shared this project at the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) convention. She later published articles on the project and the student outcomes in *Educational Leadership* and, with Taylor as co-author, in *Talking Points*. She says, “If not for the study group, I probably wouldn’t have gone forward with figuring out how I could bring this idea to fruition. But I had made a commitment, so I had accountability

to the group.”

Her participation in the social responsibility study group has encouraged Maloney to become active in many areas outside of Tenafly, including NCTE and the New Jersey Council of Teachers of English (NJCTE). Now in her 24th year of teaching, Maloney explains that the group helped her evolve as a teacher in ways she couldn’t have otherwise imagined. She reflects: “I think our study group allows all of us to be in touch with, and to go with, the organic currents of change taking place in our society in general, and in the field of education in particular. In this new world, technology allows us all to have access to knowledge; current thinking encourages collaboration and to view new systems for collaboration.”

Partnership with Moore and others has allowed her to make a developmental leap at a midpoint in her career, when the sources of professional development appeared to her to be dwindling.

RENEWAL AND A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

Elementary guidance counselor Maria Casteline considered herself socially responsible before joining the social responsibility study group but finds that the group fuels her in ways she hadn’t anticipated. She says, “It re-energizes you to see that it’s not just you when you see others who share your vision.”

Similarly, Mary Fenzel, an experienced social worker who works with elementary students, refers to a Carol Pearson quote that a member had brought to the group: “We now have choices, in many areas of our lives, about what worlds we wish to inhabit. When we take our journeys so that we know who we are and what we think and feel, what our values and convictions are, we begin to put ourselves out there and be seen. When we do so, we attract to us people like ourselves who want to live in the same kind of transformed kingdom. We form mini-kingdoms, communities of like-minded people who experiment with new ways of being and growing in the world (Pearson, 1989).”

Of the quote, Fenzel says, “I just love the quote. It speaks loudly to my feelings about our group. Whenever I am able to attend meetings, I feel a renewal of spirit and energy.”

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Involvement in a teacher study group allows opportunities for teachers to act as true teacher leaders in their schools and professional communities.

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What can
motivate
teachers to
learn?

ASK THEM

By Michelle Vaughan and James McLaughlin

“**W**hat kind of preparation or ongoing learning is required if teachers are to provide the best possible reading instruction for all students in their classrooms?” (Bean, 2004, p. 12). This foundational question is one that all schools should consider in planning professional development that will give teachers the knowledge and skills they require to address student needs.

While professional development has taken on many forms throughout the years, from one-day workshops to action research, it is still the main component of school improvement plans and recertification programs. After examining professional development experiences of six teachers in four elementary schools, we propose that the traditional definition of professional development should be expanded to include any learning opportunity that provides teachers with new skills, competencies, or ways of thinking needed



for improvement within the classroom.

We conducted a case study in four elementary schools that demonstrated consistent gains in reading achievement, despite their failure to meet Adequate Yearly Progress. By examining the professional development experiences of six teachers in these schools who reported high levels of change on a wider survey, we aimed to identify what type of professional development is required for teachers to provide exemplary instruction. While research in the field of professional development has outlined the components of professional development that most often relate to teacher change (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001), it has also determined that many professional development opportunities still lack the characteristics and content necessary to promote a change in teacher practice (Bean, 2004; Fullan, 2007).

We saw significant evidence that it was the intentions



teachers took into professional development experiences that had the greatest impact on teacher change. In any given year, teachers experienced professional development offered by an institution (i.e. state, district, school), professional development teachers sought out themselves to fill their gaps in knowledge, and learning experiences that were serendipitous moments of growth.

The institutionalized professional development was intended to acquaint teachers with new programs or textbooks, outline new reforms adopted by the district

or state, or familiarize teachers with new school or district procedures. However, it was the intentional actions of the teachers within those institutionalized experiences that determined the impact on their learning and growth. While each teacher had a path of professional development that was unique to their goals as an educator, they all encountered situations that accelerated their learning or served as a detour from their paths. What follows is a profile of each teacher that provides a context for their learning and connects their experiences within a larger framework exploring the challenges that educators must successfully navigate.

PROFILES

- Sally Owen's classroom is a bright room filled with a myriad of posters and words in English and French. Owen is from Guadalupe and is the only dual-language teacher on her grade level, teaching a class of 11 children in English and French. Owen's classroom mirrors her personality and work ethic as she strives for efficiency in her teaching. Her room is structured in a way that best suits how her children work throughout the day.

- As you enter Betty Galt's classroom, you cannot be sure which wall represents the front of the room and which is the back. Lines are blurred between student and teacher work areas. There are 21 students packed into this small area, a vast difference from Owen's tiny class roster. Galt speaks openly of the difficulties this class faces, where 18 of her 21 students are either retained, English language learners, or special education students. She has students who are nonspeakers as well as students who, according to their age, should be graduating from elementary school by now.

- Heather Penney is a National Board Certified teacher who also serves as a mentor for teachers new to the school or to teaching. She is considered a veteran on her team, although she is still relatively new to the grade level. Along with the team leader, she does the majority of the planning for the team and makes decisions that affect the direction their curriculum takes. Despite all these accomplishments, Penney depicts herself as a novice teacher who is still learning the ropes of her career.

- Walking into Sue Perch's classroom is a vastly different experience than being in Penney's room; however, the outcome is similar. Perch's classroom is filled to the brim with stimulating posters, charts, easels, books, and teacher supplies that leave one wondering where to look first. Every available space on the front board is filled with writing, and the topics represented in the front of the room range

The profile of each teacher provides a context for their learning and connects their experiences within a larger framework exploring the challenges that educators must successfully navigate.

from science to social studies to grammar. All of the items in Perch's room are geared toward assisting her students in their academic success.

- For Virginia Park, teaching is a second career. Born into a family of teachers, Park graduated college with a music therapy degree and then entered into the business world to begin her career. A few years later, Park left the corporate world and jumped into teaching “feet-first without really knowing anything, just taking tests and passing them,” she said. Although it was a scary prospect, Park has transitioned into a well-rounded educator who continues to seek additional endorsements to build her base knowledge of education.

- Mary Pratt has been a familiar face in her school since the opening of the community elementary school. She has spent more than 12 years teaching in the school, 10 of them as a member of the 3rd-grade team. As a veteran teacher, she could have easily fallen victim to a routine and lesson plans that remain unchanged year after year. However, Pratt believes that “time changes with children” and that a teacher must change as well in order for students to be successful.

ON THE PATH

The teachers in this study reported a high level of change in their practice within the previous three years. The question is: Why do these teachers choose to change? What professional development do they encounter in a given year that incites change and moves them towards their goals for professional growth? Through in-depth interviews and observations, each teacher discussed her intentions for professional development and how the intentions of administrators and peers impacted her growth.

Professional development that stemmed from personal intention had a significant impact on changes in instruction. For teachers like Galt, who attended her teacher education program in another country, she hopes that she will be able to align her knowledge with the techniques emphasized by her county. For Park and Owen, who came into teaching as a second career, it is the drive to obtain the knowledge they missed without an education degree. For Perch, Pratt, and Penney, it is the students they teach, who often are not prepared for the grade they are in and

lack the support to close the gap at home. Every teacher, like each child in a classroom, is motivated to learn and change for a different reason.

In one school within this study, there was an unusual blend of institutionalized professional development and personalized professional development. The intentions of the teachers within this school influenced the decision making about professional development. Perch explained how, through careful collaboration and teacher autonomy, the personal intentions of her peers

drove professional development decisions. Perch calls herself a product of her community. Raised in a rural agricultural community that had the highest rate of AIDS infection in the mid-1980s and the second-highest violent crime rate in the country in 2003, she is proud that she has stayed in her town to improve the education of the children in her community. Her school is a beacon of success in the district, boasting high test scores and a commitment to learning that visitors feel the moment they enter the building. She attributed much of her growth and success to the support from her principal. “We have a real good rapport with our principal,” Perch says. “She says that we know our students, and she lets us do what we need to do with our students.” This autonomy has provided a space for Perch and her colleagues to experiment with instructional models and strategies that fit the specific needs of their children. They are not only supported emotionally, but financially as well. They have a stake in the purchase of resources and make a habit of selling their ideas to the principal to obtain the necessary funds to implement them. In addition, Perch takes her development a step further by volunteering to teach in a model classroom set up for peer observation. Instead of bringing in outside staff developers on short professional development days, the faculty built a mock classroom and take turns modeling lessons for each other. This type of staff development and the support of administration served as a catalyst for teacher change for Perch and her colleagues.

All teachers interviewed spoke at length about the role their peers played in their development. Within many schools, groups of teachers intentionally reshaped the institutionalized professional development mandated by their district or school to fit their needs. Whether it was in the form of problem solving about a struggling student or sharing resources, teachers used the mandated forums of learning team meetings to collaborate and meet their professional development goals. Learning team meetings were mandatory data analysis meetings held every seven days in Galt's school. She spoke about how her team altered the topics of those meetings to meet their needs: “Learning team meetings help me, too, because then we sit together and we do best practices. So I hear what is going on next door and I try it, and sometimes it works; sometimes, it's not really my style.”

Galt felt that she could experiment with her instructional style and valued the advice from her team members because they endured the same struggles that she faced each day with her students. Both Galt and Perch grew as educators for different reasons, but they are both moving forward on their individual growth paths and teach in environments that serve as catalysts for change.

DETOURS

The journey of teacher change is filled with detours, and the teachers within this study spoke about the frustration they

The teachers in this study reported a high level of change in their practice within the previous three years.

felt when asked to deviate from their chosen direction. Detours came in the form of both federally and district-mandated initiatives that involved changes in curriculum and pedagogy, and district-mandated professional development.

Most teachers can recall a professional development session that left them feeling uninspired or confused. For Penney, the mandated workshops produced an amalgam of curriculum changes that added to her frustration level and muddled the learning objectives she was teaching. Many of these workshops addressed specific areas of the Reading First curriculum, required by the state department of education, and implementation was checked closely by local and state officials. In a school that dedicated \$25,000 to professional development that year, Penney reflected on her perception of the sessions she was attending: “In 30 minutes, how much are you going to learn? Really, these trainings are a quick 45 minutes or whatever — ‘here and try to go do it.’ How much can you really go back to use it (if) you don’t have time or they start in the middle of the year?”

Every teacher in this study repeated this message. The short, one-time required workshops actually deterred them from their development. Coupled with implementation checks following these often-expensive workshops, the teachers were left confused and stressed about what was expected of them.

Worse than the short workshop model was the “train-the-trainer” model the district used to implement new curriculum approaches in schools. In this staff development model, a few teachers would attend an off-site session, where they learned about a new instructional approach and then would offer the session to their peer at their schools. This model was flawed, for several reasons. First, the presenting teacher was not an expert on the information they were being asked to transmit and thus could not address questions and provide follow-up appropriately. Also, the buy-in from the staff was extremely low because they were not provided with a firsthand explanation of why the changes were being implemented at their school. Perch talked about her frustration with being held accountable for implementation without proper training: “If we could have that hands-on person to be there when we have questions, someone always there to answer our questions, it would make it much easier when we go to our learning team meetings. We just need a model — just don’t give it to us and say, ‘You need to do this.’”

Most of the administrators in this study served as detours to teacher change instead of as catalysts. The most prevalent challenges were high turnover within the main office and conflicting ideologies concerning curriculum and instructional practices. At Park’s school, it seemed that as soon as she was beginning to get comfortable with an administrator, that person would be replaced and goals for the school and the teachers would shift.

“It is unfortunate because there has always been a change in our administration,” Park says. “It’s either been the principal or assistant principal; it’s never been a cohesive two people for a long period of time.”

READING THE ROAD AHEAD

Despite the detours they experienced, the teachers in this study reported a high level of change in the previous three years of instruction. How and why do teachers persevere and grow in spite of their circumstances?

All detours eventually end. Whether it is a state-mandated program that is no longer supported or an administrator who leaves the school, teachers re-evaluate their paths and read the road ahead to determine how their professional development goals align with student needs. At the end of each detour, teachers must question how their instruction changed and determine what adaptations they will keep or discard. Interestingly, all the teachers viewed these questions through the same lens: the needs of their students. Galt says, “I keep thinking of my students. They are my priority, and I think that whatever there is for me to do to help them move on, that’s what they need to do.”

Since student needs change from year to year, the intentions for professional development change along with them. Teachers continue to seek new information to meet those needs or adapt the institutionalized professional development to fit their goals. The teachers within this study took control of their learning and made their experiences work for them. Instead of being hampered by the mandated 30-minute workshop, they recognized its flaws and altered its components. The intentional influence participants have on their learning has propelled their growth forward and redefined what is considered professional development at their schools.

The intentional influence participants have on their learning has propelled their growth forward and redefined what is considered professional development at their schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At the state and national level, stakeholders need to address teacher involvement in professional development. Teachers felt confined by the restrictive methods they were asked to use from mandated programs, such as the Reading First program, and did not understand the rationale for required changes. While the district in this study carries an A rating according to standardized test scores, some schools continue to fail year after year without proper remediation. The four schools profiled here have slowly and steadily increased reading scores, yet all teachers discussed the district as a power that seemed to work against them instead of with them. An increase in flexibility and trust by district decision makers may result in more productivity and innovation in the classrooms.

Also, the “one-size-fits-all” method of professional development and implementation is not working for these teachers. Teachers are expected to differentiate to meet students’ individual needs, yet their professional development is not differentiated to their needs. Teachers within this study reported

a higher level of change when they had ownership over their learning and a role in the decision making.

We also recommend that school administrators re-examine professional development topics addressed at their schools. Each teacher mentioned the community in which their students live as a challenge to their learning. Providing professional development in instructional techniques and methods that relate to and engage the community of the student population is an intriguing enterprise. By creating a partnership between teachers, parents, and community members, districts could develop a plan that focuses on how to understand the community, modify traditional practices to maximize the strengths of each community, and examine how teachers and parents view students' problems at school (McKinney, Haberman, Stafford-Johnson, & Robinson, 2008).

Good teachers consistently develop collaborative relationships with their peers and enrich their knowledge base through personalized professional experiences outside of the institution. The teachers in this study intentionally sought out their professional development or altered institutionalized professional development to meet their needs. They expanded our definition of what constitutes professional development to include any learning opportunity that provides them with new skills, competencies, or ways of thinking needed for improvement within the classroom. These six teachers navigated the detours placed

in their path and are now rejoining the main road. There will be other detours ahead for the teachers to navigate, but we are confident that their strong intentions for meaningful learning will carry them closer to the goals they have for their growth and the growth of their students.

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Grassroots growth

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Establish the outcomes



As Learning Forward Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh describes in her column (see p. 68), clearly establishing the intended outcomes for learning is the first step in designing effective professional learning. This framework is one strategy for delineating the changes desired from any learning experience. Fill in the chart below to make the desired changes from your learning explicit.

KASAB chart

DESIRED CHANGES	DEFINITION	STUDENTS	TEACHERS	PRINCIPALS
K nowledge	Conceptual understanding of information, theories, principles, and research.			
A ttitude	Beliefs about the value of particular information or strategies.			
S kill	Strategies and processes to apply knowledge.			
A spiration	Desires, or internal motivation, to engage in a particular practice.			
B ehavior	Consistent application of knowledge and skills.			

Source: Killion, J. (2008). *Assessing impact: Evaluating staff development* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press & NSDC.

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Our purpose: Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day to every student's success.



Nelson



Guerra

Cultural liaisons serve as bridge between community and school

Educators in schools serving large populations of culturally diverse students often have backgrounds that differ from the students and families they serve. This cultural mismatch can make developing strong school-community relationships a challenge. One strategy for addressing this concern is the use of a cultural liaison. A cultural liaison is someone who has standing within a community culture group and is willing to serve as a link between the community and the school. A cultural liaison helps school personnel better understand the values and norms of the community and helps community members negotiate the structures of the school system. We had the opportunity to work closely with a school that used a cultural liaison as part of a program to raise science achievement among English language learners.

Schneider Middle School in Pasadena, Texas, wanted to work more closely with parents to improve science achievement. One of the challenges they faced was connecting with Latino parents, particularly Spanish-speaking parents. The school developed the LIFT Parent Academy, which brings parents to school twice a month to learn about the science curriculum and how to support science learning at home. The science specialist, who is African-American and grew up in the community, serves as a cultural liaison between the school and the African-American community. She did not have the same relationship with the Latino families in the community. In order to reach Latino families, a parent volunteer who was well-known in the Latino community was hired to work with the LIFT program. Using the cultural liaison approach, the school developed a program that raised science achievement and helped the school become more culturally responsive. (For more information about the LIFT Parent Academy, visit www.stellarcenter.txstate.edu/research.html.) Schneider Middle School liaison Maria Luisa Garza and science specialist Amy Jolivet House write about the benefits of a cultural liaison to the success of the LIFT program and to their own growth.

In each issue of *JSD*, Sarah W. Nelson and Patricia L. Guerra 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/news/authors/guerranelson.cfm.

THE BRIDGE BETWEEN CULTURES RUNS IN BOTH DIRECTIONS

By Maria Luisa Garza

I am the liaison for our LIFT Parent Academy. We are building a bridge that helps parents understand what their children are expected to know and what they are learning. We teach parents in their own language, Spanish. This program opens the door to learning and shows parents what the school has to offer. The most important thing the school and the parents have in common is that we want our kids to get the best education we can offer.

I have to admit, I wasn't expecting to be front and center as one of the speakers at our meetings and was a bit nervous at first. I had my doubts I was the right choice for this. I thought that maybe I wasn't what the parents and the school needed. On the other hand, I am a parent who wants the best education for my child, and that is what all parents want for their kids. I feel I am a representative for all the parents in the school. I live in the same neighborhood as our students and parents. Some are my next-door neighbors. Some have my personal cell phone number, and they know they can count on me whenever they need me. Whenever they have everyday questions or problems, I am their friend and translator. They know I will give them my honest opinion

WE ARE ALL EQUALS IN THIS VENTURE

By Amy Jolivet House

Mrs. Garza is well-known in the community and often helps others because of her command of English and Spanish. Because of her connectedness in the community, she has been able to go beyond being the Spanish voice of the program and has lent her credibility to me, giving me entrée to the parents. Sometimes this has been as simple as introducing me. In other instances, it has involved her being my cultural tour guide as we visit businesses in the area. She has made me comfortable in places that I would not have frequented because of my inability to speak the functional language used there. By helping me navigate her world, she has built my confidence, and I am able to go back, by myself or with my family, and be a familiar face. I know that there are often errands for the program that she could do just fine without me, but she is working diligently to let the community know that she and I and LIFT are

all linked. I often tell her that the parents accept me because of her. Her trust in me has let the parents know that they can trust me, too.

I have taken the opportunity she has created for me and used it to develop genuine rapport with our families. The parents see that I am not just a teacher; I am also a parent. Our children are in the same schools. I have the same concerns and cares for my family as they do. We frequent the same stores and businesses. We may not speak the same language as we go about our daily activities, but our lives share many common elements, including the desire for growth and success for our children. During our meetings or outside encounters with the parents, the camaraderie is obvious to all. Smiles, handshakes and kind words are always exchanged. The parents feel my regard and respect for them and Mrs. Garza. We are all equals in this venture.

Under Mrs. Garza's tutelage, my Spanish is improving slowly. This experience, more than any other, has increased my empathy for monolingual Spanish-speaking parents. It is no easy task to

acquire a new language as an adult, and I am acutely aware of my shortcomings when I try to speak. I feel the same hesitation that the parents feel when they try to speak in English. I try to push myself when I'm with the parents so that they will know they are as safe with me as I am with them when they are reaching for words. We often all laugh at ourselves in the meeting as both sides push toward common ground.

Truly, Mrs. Garza and I have affected each other as this work challenge has evolved into a genuine love and respect for each other. She is changing me, and I am changing her. We are wives, mothers, and women finding out that our worlds often collide in sick children, stubborn husbands, crazy pets, and a love of what we do. This carries over into our meetings, and I hope that our parents see us as a model of friendship, trust, and how barriers can just be imaginary lines to step across.

•
Amy Jolivet House is the science specialist at Schneider Middle School, Pasadena, Texas. ■

and guide them to the best solution possible.

Working in the LIFT program with Mrs. House is the best part of the package. Think about two women with totally different backgrounds, cultures, and ideas working side by side for eight hours a day. It could have been a disaster, but it wasn't. This is a match made in heaven. We could never be so different, yet so the same. I have started teaching Mrs. House a few words in Spanish. She practices

with me, and, at our meetings. I have seen that our parents feel comfortable approaching her. When I see her trying to communicate with parents in Spanish and they try to respond in English, that blows my mind. The parents see that Mrs. House treats them as equals, that they are not beneath her even if they don't speak English. Mrs. House opened up to the parents. She introduced them to her family and jokes around with them. Most importantly, she accepts me for who I

am: a proud Hispanic woman with two teenagers, a husband, four Chihuahuas, a house, and everything that comes with that package. I have begun to build a bridge welcoming her into my world. But that bridge runs both ways. Mrs. House has rubbed off on me, too. We are friends.

•
Maria Luisa Garza is the liaison for the LIFT Parent Academy at Schneider Middle School, Pasadena, Texas. ■



A collaborative, high-performing partnership is possible — some assembly required

There’s a story I like about an ad in a magazine. I don’t know if it’s true. The ad said, “How to write a novel. Simple, easy-to-follow directions. \$20.” When people sent in their 20 bucks, they received a dictionary, with the instructions, “Some assembly required.” Isn’t that the truth! And we know the same could be said for relationships. Perhaps I’ve just been asked to work with you and our shared goal is a collaborative, high-performance partnership — some assembly required. Or I’ve come into a new school, classroom, or group of students and their parents, and I want to partner with those folks so that we can do amazing things together and enjoy the process — some assembly required. That assembly occurs one conversation at a time, as Angela Brooks-Rallins explains.

— Susan Scott

By Angela Brooks-Rallins

This is my first full year as principal. I had worked in our central office in human resources until I decided it was time to come back into the schools. I missed the collaboration among staff, I missed working with a large team, and mostly I missed the students. Midyear, there was an opportunity to fill the principal role at our flagship campus. I transitioned into the role in April 2010, which is a challenging time of year in a 6th- to 12th-grade building.

Graduations for 8th-grade and 12th-grade students, end-of-year activities, and general dissatisfaction together created tension among all stakeholders. During my first month, I listened. I listened to teachers in one-on-one meetings and whole-group meetings, I listened to parents, students,

and nonteaching staff. I began making small changes to get the best results possible for that school year, balanced with planning how we would move forward as a school community for the following school year.

I had been to several leadership development conferences and trainings, and through my doctorate in educational leadership, I was exposed to many ideas about leadership that were beginning to transfer to schools and classrooms across the world. I even went to visit some of the renowned schools to learn what they were doing to be deemed successful. It was the ideas in *Fierce Conversations* that gave me the language and action steps to practice what I believe are the keys to success in schools and classrooms.

I have always felt strongly about the social and emotional development of students. We have an obligation

to teach them about being smart plus having heart. As I transitioned into planning mode, something inside me told me to not let that belief go. I told myself, “This is what you believe in your heart, and what we as adults have to model for our students and families.”

I learned from my time listening to staff that they did not feel heard. As a whole, we were not communicating effectively with our stakeholders, including our families and students. I decided each staff member would read *Fierce Conversations* for summer reading to prepare us for the next school year. By the end of the summer, I realized that the tools in the book supported all of us in our transition, regardless of our role or level of experience.



Brooks-Rallins

In each issue of *JSD*, Susan Scott (susan@fierceinc.com) explores aspects of communication that encourage meaningful collaboration. Scott, author of *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success At Work & In Life, One Conversation at a Time* (Penguin, 2002) and *Fierce Leadership: A Bold Alternative to the Worst “Best” Practices of Business Today* (Broadway Business, 2009), leads Fierce Inc. (www.fierceinc.com), which helps companies around the world transform the conversations that are central to their success. Fierce in the Schools carries this work into schools and higher education.

Columns are available at www.learningforward.org. © Copyright, Fierce Inc., 2011.

JULIE WILBUR

One of the instructional leaders on my team has been working in education for 43 years. Julie Wilbur is completely committed to coaching and building the capacity of teachers after her work as a classroom teacher for more than 35 years. I wondered how I, with fewer years of experience in the field of education, would continue to encourage her to grow professionally and personally.

After she read *Fierce Conversations*, Wilbur's ideas about leadership changed as well. She said, "This is what I feel I already believe in, and now it gives me the tools I need to put it into practice." Wilbur has embraced the mineral rights model by digging deeper in her coaching sessions and is working to deepen her relationships. The concepts of *Fierce Conversations* have allowed her to build trust among a staff that is hesitant to trust one another.

This connection also deepened our relationship. Wilbur knows that I value her as a lifelong learner, and we continue to have conversations about her coaching style and facilitating conversations. Together, we practice the tough conversations that need to happen. She made a list of all of the conversations she needs to have as we kick off a new school year and start with a clean slate. The implications of this deep investment in changing our staff culture are immense. As a leader, I know I have a more engaged staff member who trusts me and is willing to take risks on conversations to ultimately deepen relationships. This is miles from where we ended the school year just months ago.

ANDREA HERNANDEZ

Ideas in *Fierce Conversations* also impacted a new team member to our school community. Andrea Hernandez was hired to lead all after-school programs and bring in opportunities to our students that build on the academic opportunities we offer at

We strive to be a school where students want to attend, participate, and take ownership of their educational experiences. The end results are highly caring and ethical people who will be college-bound and able to succeed in an ever-changing world.

school. Hernandez has a strong desire to develop students through her nontraditional teaching role. She has a passion for communication and change in an organization. At a time when our school is going through a transition period, she has the skills to bring critical context to our conversations to shape a transition plan for the betterment of our students' experiences.

Hernandez went on a path of professional self-discovery and realized that she had to come out from behind herself and make her conversations real to accomplish her goals. She said that as she joined our team, "not once in the past five weeks have I felt even an inkling of having to 'fake it.' I am very comfortable and confident in the conversations that I'm having with people I encounter, both within my organization and outside. When conversing with people for the first time, I experience no anxiety or concern about how they might perceive my lack of knowledge because I honestly believe that I have no lack of knowledge, only a different set of it."

CHANGING A CULTURE

We are framing our school meetings using the beach ball model. We believe as a team that we each bring specific context to the conversation that is extremely important when making a decision for our school and that we all need to be heard. As a leader, I know how important it is that all people be

heard before I make a final decision. We continue to develop our belief that each person's stripe on the beach ball impacts the end result.

Our teachers have shared feedback about our changing culture of collaboration as they prepare for students' arrival at the start of the new school year. In coaching sessions, they have said, "We just feel like there is so much trust in our abilities this year, and that is really motivating to us," "It seems like there is a real effort to focus on building real relationships in the school," and "We really appreciate that the leadership team values our opinion, and we already feel like we're being heard." I look forward to continuing to tackle our toughest challenges and leaving a positive emotional wake for our staff through conversations.

Hernandez's and the teachers' experiences are just as important as Wilbur's experience, yet they all came to the team with such different skills, context, beliefs, and knowledge. We have only begun to build our capacity, and we have a strong foundation to build upon.

The principles of *Fierce Conversations* allow me as a leader to bridge all of these differences to align to one common goal — high student engagement. We strive to be a school where students want to attend, participate, and take ownership of their educational experiences. The end results are highly caring and ethical people who will be college-bound and able to succeed in an ever-changing world. Our work in building our team's capacity has also created an engaged staff committed to changing students' futures.

•
Angela Brooks-Rallins is principal of Perspectives Charter School Rodney D. Joslin Campus in Chicago. Joslin serves 6th- to 12th-grade youth in the city of Chicago, with 98% of students graduating and going to college. ■

Calling all schools: Apply to join the Learning Forward Learning School Alliance.



Is your school in the beginning stages of creating professional learning communities?

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- Special sessions and receptions at Seminar Conference convening
- Four discounted Annual Conference registrations and special networking opportunities
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- Learning School Innovation Configuration (LIC) tool
- Five Learning Forward comprehensive memberships with accompanying materials
- Monthly webinars and facilitated conversations
- Accessing *A Learning School* tool kit with hundreds of protocols, tools, and resources
- Dedicated online community networking site
- Exceptional professional learning for an entire school team
- Recognition for completion of LSA program

Just a reminder:

- You can use your Title I dollars and other federal sources for the program fee.
- A limited number of partial scholarships will be available.

Apply online at www.learningforward.org/alliance. Application deadline: March 15, 2012.



Sponsored in part by the Arthur W. Maier David Foundation.

How adults learn forms the foundation of the Learning Designs standard.

By Eleanor Drago-Severson

Understanding how adults learn is an essential component for shaping effective professional learning. The author illustrates how the three strands of the Learning Designs standard — apply learning theories, research, and models; select learning designs; and promote active engagement — can lead educators to create learning experiences with maximum impact.

CYCLE OF SUCCESS: Learning sequence melds disjointed activities into a streamlined structure.

By Colleen Broderick

At Mapleton Expeditionary School for the Arts in Thornton, Colo., professional learning felt disconnected and frenetic until the leadership team created a teaching and learning cycle that connects multiple learning designs into a four-week program that defines a clear path for teacher and student learning.

IN YASIR'S SHOES: A principal gains insight by shadowing an English language learner student.

By Shari Farris

Shadowing a student gives great insight into engaging and motivating English language learners toward academic success and meaningful relationships. The author offers strategies to make shadowing a purposeful and practical experience for teachers and school leaders.

In demonstration classrooms, it's show-and-tell every day.

By Karen Grose and Jim Strachan

In Toronto's demonstration classrooms, small groups of teachers observe a colleague in the classroom, then participate in a collaborative debriefing session with an instructional guide or the demonstration classroom teacher. Participants report improvements in practice and connections with colleagues as well as increased student learning.

A STATE FOR EXCELLENCE: New Jersey boosts learning power with online video resources.

By Victoria Duff, Wendy Sauer, and Sonia Caus Gleason

New Jersey bolsters its professional learning tool kit with Success at the Core, an online resource that aims to strengthen leadership teams as well as offer teachers strategies for improving instruction. The program combines videos of effective classroom practices with materials that encourage analysis, reflection, and action.

TEACHING 2.0: Teams keep teachers and students plugged into technology.

By Michelle Bourgeois and Bud Hunt

The St. Vrain Valley School District in Longmont, Colo., created the Digital Learning Collaborative, a two-year professional learning program that gives teachers an opportunity to learn how to improve instruction and increase student learning by using digital tools in the classroom.

PAUSE, REWIND, REFLECT: Video clubs throw open the classroom doors.

By Miriam Gamoran Sherin and Katherine A. Linsenmeier

By forming a video club, a group of teachers can watch and discuss excerpts of videos from their classrooms. Doing so creates common ground for discussion, provides a place for sustained reflection on classroom interaction, breaks down privacy barriers, and promotes professional community. The authors outline the benefits of a video club as well as guidelines for creating one.

FLYING SOLO: Teachers take charge of their learning through self-study research.

By Anastasia Samaras

Teachers who want total control of their own professional development can improve their practice by following this five-step plan for self-study: Write your own question, work with a critical friends team, plan new pedagogies, document and assess your research, and share what you've learned. Teacher Libbie Edwards illustrates her own self-study research project.

GRASSROOTS GROWTH: The evolution of a teacher study group.

By Dana Maloney, Terry Moore, and Monica Taylor

A teacher study group in Tenafly, N.J., that began as a grassroots professional learning community revitalizes its members, strengthening their commitment to social responsibility and helping them grow as leaders within and beyond their school district. The authors describe the group's format and process and offer strategies for forming a teacher study group.

call for articles

Theme: Data
Manuscript deadline: Dec. 15, 2011
Issue: August 2012

Theme: Outcomes
Manuscript deadline: Feb. 15, 2012
Issue: October 2012

Theme: Leadership
Manuscript deadline: April 15, 2012
Issue: December 2012

• Please send manuscripts and questions to Christy Colclasure (christy.colclasure@learningforward.org).

• Notes to assist authors in preparing a manuscript are at www.learningforward.org/news/jsd/guidelines.cfm.



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feature

What can motivate teachers to learn? Ask them.

By Michelle Vaughan and James McLaughlin

The authors set out to learn what type of professional learning leads to exemplary instruction. After profiling six teachers in four elementary schools, their answer became clear: Teachers' intentions had the greatest impact on change. They recommend giving teachers an increased role in decision making as the route to more productivity and innovation in the classrooms.

columns

Cultural proficiency:

Cultural liaisons serve as bridge between community and school.

By Sarah W. Nelson and Patricia L. Guerra

A science specialist and a cultural liaison team up to increase science achievement and cultural responsiveness in a Texas middle school.

Collaborative culture:

A collaborative, high-performing partnership is possible — some assembly required.

By Susan Scott and Angela Brooks-Rallins

A first-year principal shifts her school's culture by supporting her staff in conducting important conversations.

From the director:

The goals we want for students must be included in the learning designs we create for adults.

By Stephanie Hirsh

Choosing the appropriate learning design is critical to the effectiveness of any professional learning.

Sandler Foundation supports Common Core

Learning Forward has received a \$500,000 grant from Sandler Foundation to launch Transforming Professional Learning to Prepare College- and Career-Ready Students: Implementing the Common Core. This two-year initiative will lead a statewide, comprehensive professional learning system that supports educators as they implement Common Core State Standards and new student assessments.

Common Core Standards and new assessments are intended to prepare all students to be college- and career-ready at the end of their pre-K-12 education and will necessitate different learning experiences for students. Because the standards focus on students' construction of new knowledge and application of learning in authentic situations, teachers will need to employ instructional strategies that integrate critical and creative thinking, collaboration, problem solving, research and inquiry skills, and presentation skills.

Sandler Foundation is committed to increasing opportunity for underserved students. "We have an opening to prepare all of our students to be critical thinkers with the skills needed to solve the pressing problems we face," said Susan Sandler of Sandler Foundation, "but the potential of the Common Core

State Standards and assessments can only be realized through a serious commitment to professional development."

"Full implementation of Common Core State Standards and readiness for new student assessments require that all school-based educators expand their expertise to produce high-level learning for all students," said Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward. "This calls for new forms of professional learning that engage educators in the same learning experiences they will create for their students. We cannot expect to realize the promise of Common Core with old models of professional learning. These new standards and assessments require us to rethink the entire system from policy to practice."

Working in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers and with support from the National Governors Association, National Association of State Boards of Education, and American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, Learning Forward will select a demonstration state in which to transform professional learning and create a comprehensive system, guided by policy and modeled through practice, that spans from the statehouse to the classroom. Five critical friend states will serve as contributors and critics.

book club

**REALIZING THE PROMISE
OF 21ST-CENTURY EDUCATION:
AN OWNER'S MANUAL**
By Bruce Joyce and Emily Calhoun

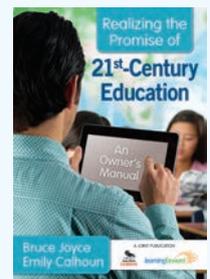
While many futurists tout the value of teaching students 21st-century skills, bridging the concept to practice is best accomplished by professional educators. Joyce and Calhoun know how to enact critical reforms that enable schools to prepare students for today's workforce. They outline a clear vision for advancing school reform that emphasizes infusing technology across the curriculum. Specific steps include:

- Providing technology access to *all* students to promote equity and engagement;
- Developing hybrid courses that prepare students to meet 21st-century needs;
- Designing professional development that connects technology to teaching;

- Improving literacy instruction;
- Changing the high school paradigm; and
- Involving teachers, parents, and community members in school leadership.

Educators can transform education using the information and communications technology. Joyce and Calhoun show how to deliver on the promise of a 21st-century education by teaching students the skills they need to achieve in their careers and in life.

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 \$59. To receive this book, add the Book Club to your membership before Dec. 15. It will be mailed in January. For more information about this or any membership package, call 800-727-7288 or email office@learningforward.org.





Don't underestimate the value of a checklist for building a learning community

For school leaders faced with higher expectations for student success, time constraints, and diminishing resources, effective professional learning is critical. We need to identify what we need to know and learn it effectively for our students to be successful. This is not new — we have known it for a long time. So what's the issue?

For me, the issue is all the issues, the barrage of which sounds like rain on a tin roof. Like so many others, I wish someone would give me a checklist, a silver bullet for building an effective learning community. Impossible, you say. No, it isn't. Let me share my checklist for creating an effective model of learning.

These actions can change your school or district culture into a caring, high-performing learning community.

- Reorganize the schedule to encourage adult learning.
- Use a curriculum that addresses your state's assessment.
- Expand the curriculum so it addresses much more than the state's assessment.
- Assess frequently.
- Gather, study, and act on what the data scream at us.
- Engage all in the process of school improvement.

Mark Diaz is president of Learning Forward's board of trustees.

on board MARK DIAZ

- Learn what it means to teach effectively — and then do it.
- Learning what it means to learn effectively — and make it happen.
- Create and maintain an atmosphere of trust.
- Care for one another.
- Address whether and how students are engaged in your system.
- Hire, develop, and nurture the best people.
- Encourage those who aren't the best to seek another profession.
- Use protocols.
- Be courageous.
- Laugh, smile, and celebrate often.
- Advocate for effective professional learning.

I am sure you can add to this checklist. Please do. And don't dismiss the power of the checklist. Atul Gawande, writer and surgeon, recently published *The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right* (2009). Gawande addresses the problem of "extreme complexity": There is so much knowledge to apply to so many big challenges, yet still we fail in a wide range of fields and circumstances. When a critical care specialist at Johns Hopkins University tried using a simple checklist to tackle just one of the many challenges his hospital faced, he demonstrated the value of delineating

the steps that make up one part of a very complex endeavor. Subsequent studies showed that disciplined use of checklists can save lives.

One key element of the success of the checklist, Gawande discovered, is the communication and teamwork that become a part of disciplined use of such a list. When everyone in the operating room commits to documenting their responsibilities against a checklist, the surgeon isn't the lone ranger anymore — she is a member of a team. The members all take collective responsibility for what happens as a result of their work together. Doesn't that sound like what we need to make happen in our schools?

My list is full of concepts that require a lot of work. I am asking you to detail the important steps you need to take, agree with your teams on your list, and commit together to the results you want to see. When you do that, you're well on your way to making Learning Forward's purpose a reality in your school: Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.

REFERENCE

Gawande, A. (2009). *The checklist manifesto: How to get things right*. New York: Henry Holt & Co. ■





LEARNING FORWARD'S PURPOSE: Every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves.

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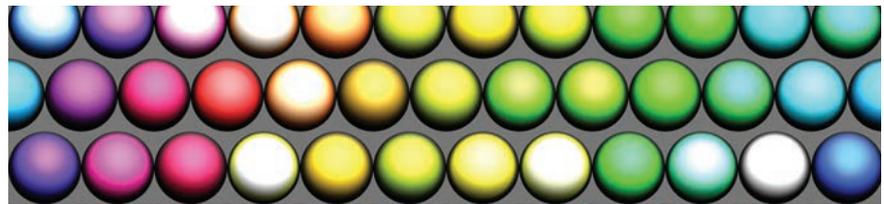
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E-learning session focuses on professional learning communities

The central word in professional learning communities is learning. Unfortunately, the learning often goes missing in many professional learning communities. In this five-week e-learning program, author and educator Lois Brown Easton takes an organic approach to purpose-driven professional learning and offers tools and strategies for focusing the work of learning communities on educator learning and student achievement. Participants will analyze their current learning communities and share strategies for strengthening existing professional learning communities and building new communities from the ground up. Through weekly live sessions and collaborative group activities, participants will learn and share strategies for building trust within a learning community, purposefully engaging colleagues in dialogue, and maintaining focus on a learning community's purpose.

All program participants will receive a print copy of Easton's book, *Professional Learning By Design: Putting the Learning Back Into PLCs*.

In addition, program participants will:

- Understand the professional learning structures and practices that lead to effective professional learning;
- Know how to link purpose to structure within a learning community;
- Understand the key elements of organizing a professional learning community;
- Explore strategies for helping colleagues work better in groups;
- Learn key skills related to facilitating dialogue and soliciting feedback; and
- Examine the purpose, mission, vision, organization, and other key elements of a community in which they currently participate.

The program runs Oct. 25-Nov. 22, with weekly live sessions Tuesdays at 1-2 p.m. Eastern time.

Program fee is \$199 for Learning Forward members; \$249 for nonmembers. For groups of four or more, the fee is \$149 per person.

Visit www.learningforward.org/elearning/programs for more information or to sign up.



Easton

LEARNING FORWARD CALENDAR

- Dec. 3-7:** Learning Forward's 2011 Annual Conference in Anaheim, Calif.
- Feb. 10, 2012:** Apply to present at Learning Forward's 2012 Annual Conference in Boston, Mass.
- Feb. 28, 2012:** Apply to join the next cohort of Learning School Alliance schools.
- March 15, 2012:** Apply to join Academy Class of 2014.
- July 15-18, 2012:** Learning Forward's 2012 Summer Conference in Denver, Colo.

BRING CONFERENCE LEARNING HOME

www.learningforward.org/elearning/conferencearchives/

Purchase access to selected archived sessions from both the 2010 Annual Conference in Atlanta and the 2011 Summer Conference in Indianapolis. Learning Forward offered a virtual conference for both learning opportunities, and now members can explore recorded keynote addresses and view a range of concurrent sessions.

PRACTITIONERS TALK ABOUT THE STANDARDS

www.learningforward.org/standards



The recently released Standards for Professional Learning describe the characteristics of professional learning that lead to effective teaching and leadership practices and improved student results. In addition to the in-depth elaborations available online, educators will now have access to videos of practitioners talking about the importance of the standards. This month, Mike Ford, superintendent of the Phelps-Clifton Springs (N.Y.) Central School District, talks about the Leadership standard.



PLANNING FOR THE NEXT PRINCIPAL

www.learningforward.org/blog

Frederick Brown, Learning Forward's director of strategy and development, calls on schools and districts to develop strong succession plans that keep a steady pipeline of talent in the principal's chair.

"Assistant principals, teacher leaders, and others who demonstrate potential for leadership must be given the opportunities to further develop their skills," Brown writes. "Those who aspire to be principals should be strongly encouraged to actively participate on school leadership teams, lead projects that focus on teaching and learning, and participate in professional learning opportunities that strengthen their skills and prepare them for the job."



Brown

JOIN A TEACHER LEADER COMMUNITY



www.learningforward.org/elearning/communities/

Join educators from around the world as a member of Learning Forward's online community of teacher leaders. Share knowledge and expertise, get answers to the issues in your school and classroom, and tap the expertise of colleagues as you collaborate to ensure that every student experiences great teaching every day. Community discussion topics developed by teachers address common problems, share stories, and provide feedback and resources.



The goals we want for students must be considered in the learning designs we create for adults

Those who have read Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning may realize by now that not all professional learning is created equal. In terms of the Learning Designs standard, that means that not all professional learning is designed appropriately, and not all professional learning achieves its intended results.

Establishing clarity about the intended outcomes for professional learning must precede the selection of the learning design to ensure proper planning, implementation, follow-up support, and evaluation. A common framework for explaining intended outcomes is KASAB, which stands for knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspiration, and behaviors (Killion, 2008, p. 38). There are strategies that are appropriate for developing awareness (K=knowledge); changing minds (A=attitudes); developing expertise (S=skills); inspiring action (A=aspiration); or instilling routines (B=behaviors). (See tool on p. 55.)

A leader demonstrates poor judgment when he or she holds individuals accountable for particular results after selecting the wrong learning design for achieving them. Let's say a school system adopts a new math program at the elementary level. After several months engaging

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teachers in examining various options, adopting a new philosophy about math instruction, purchasing new technology and manipulatives, the district is ready to launch the initiative. District staff convene all elementary teachers in a large auditorium to provide a half-day introduction to the new math curriculum. At the end of the day, the district curriculum director announces that evaluators will assess teachers' progress in using the curriculum during the first six weeks. The district has no other plans for ongoing support.

I could save the district the expense and effort of evaluation. According to research from Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers (1980), the district should expect to hear that about 10% of the teachers are mastering the new curriculum. Show-and-tell teaching is not an effective design for promoting the development of KASAB. While the district had invested considerable time thinking about its outcomes, it failed to select appropriate learning designs to achieve them.

According to the Learning Designs standard, designing effective professional learning combines sophisticated understanding of adult learning theories, research, and models of human learning. There are several key factors to keep in mind when selecting and designing learning. Educator learning should replicate

student learning. In other words, if principals are learning how to lead learning teams, the learning experience should occur within learning teams. If teachers are learning how to implement problem-based learning strategies, they should learn it by experiencing problem-based learning. The goals we want for students must be included in the designs we create for the adults.

Powerful learning strategies include active engagement, modeling, reflection, metacognition, application, feedback, ongoing support, assessment, and more. It occurs in formal, informal, and hybrid learning settings and is organized for individuals, teams, and schoolwide groups. Some learning occurs during the workday, and other learning occurs after school, in evenings, and during the summer.

We know educators' time is precious and resources are tight. We have a tremendous responsibility to ensure professional learning is beneficial, meets educators' goals, and leads to its intended results for students.



REFERENCES

- Joyce, B. & Showers, B. (1980, February). Improving inservice training: The messages of research. *Educational Leadership*, 37(5), 379-385.
- Killion, J. (2008). *Assessing impact: Evaluating staff development* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press & NSDC. ■