

## **FOCUS** REFLECTING ON PRACTICE

### **Accentuate the formative:**

Michigan teachers use rubrics and video to improve their practice.

*By Theron Blakeslee, Denny Chandler, Edward Roeber, and Tara Kintz*

Lauri Bach, an 8th-grade U.S. history teacher in Michigan, is a member of a school-based learning team studying formative assessment practices with her colleagues. While teams like this are a supportive place to discuss new teaching practices, they may not be set up to provide an essential component of improvement: descriptive, actionable feedback to each other about actual classroom practice. Researchers from the Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME) project of the Michigan Department of Education worked with Bach and seven other teachers to observe in their classrooms, video their teaching, and then use rubrics to analyze and reflect on their teaching.

### **Leading the way in literacy:**

Classroom visits offer a comprehensive view of teaching and learning.

*By Bonnie Houck and Sandi Novak*

Many districts need clear classroom data focused on the literacy culture and instructional practices being implemented in each school. Understanding these elements is crucial for success, and this is where the Literacy Classroom Visit Model can make

a difference. Collecting and using Literacy Classroom Visit Model data from every school across a district can provide a richer, more comprehensive view of the status of teaching and learning districtwide. Districts can use these data to design improvement plans and help outline the best strategies for reaching district and school goals.

### **Process for discovery:**

Project-based learning builds teachers' collaboration skills.

*By Andrew Miller*

Research shows that project-based learning is a successful way to engage both students and teachers in the classroom. If that's the case, instructional leaders at the Shanghai American School in China wondered, why aren't we using the elements of project-based learning to engage teachers in professional development? The school faced two challenges: the constant turnover of teachers and a need to create a culture for coaching. To address these challenges, the school's instructional coaches developed project-based learning professional development to build a collaborative culture that is aligned with the school's goal of a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

### **Replay, reflect, refine:**

Video-based coaching accelerates teacher growth.

*By David Baker, Catherine Carter, Patricia Hagan, Temple Hayles, Rychie Rhodes, and Karen Smith*

One challenge the traditional

coaching cycle presents is that the data collection and reflection are driven by the coach's memory. Contrast this with a video-based coaching cycle. Teacher and coach begin the process in the same way — having a planning conversation to start the cycle and set goals as usual — but the shift happens from this point forward. The observation is done via video, meaning that the lesson can be replayed as many times as desired and the lesson is grounded, not by perception and memory, but in reality so the teacher can see the lesson through her own eyes.

### **What to do about Jim?**

Professional dialogue turns difficult conversations into growth opportunities.

*By Joseph Jones and T.J. Vari*

Professional dialogue centered on improving someone's performance is challenging. Difficult conversations are too often avoided due to the unpredictable manner in how the message will be received, the potential strain on the relationship, and also the technical clarity necessary to lead the conversation. Establishing and systematizing professional dialogue in the workplace transforms the difficulty and complexity of such conversations and creates manageable, meaningful, and growth-oriented opportunities. Three important strategies take workplace conversations to the next level.

## IDEAS

### I am mentor, I am coach:

Effective mentors help new leaders develop their own strengths.

*By Donna Augustine-Shaw and Marceta Reilly*

Educators moving into leadership roles often feel most anxious about having all the answers for the people with whom they will be working. They think the new job is about knowing and doing. But it is really more about being — bringing their strengths to the table and developing the capacity of others to be brilliant. This turns mentorship on its head. It's not about merely being a kind buddy to help new leaders learn the ropes. It's about coaching them to become clear about their own values, beliefs, and strengths. From this self-knowledge, new leaders can step into their leadership role with authenticity and groundedness. This is the solid basis for authority and respect.

## VOICES

### CALL TO ACTION

**Greatness is within the grasp of every teacher.**

*By Stephanie Hirsh*

No matter how much say a teacher has in district-led professional learning, he or she can make sure to push personally toward excellence.

### OUR TAKE

**Educators have the clout to carry our message to Congress.**

*By Melinda George*

Learning Forward members' stories are making a difference with the U.S. Senate as members consider Title IIA funding.



## ASK

**Are conferences and workshops valid and effective?**

*By Michelle Bowman King*

A conference or workshop can be effective depending on the purpose and design of the learning and what happens before and after an event.

## WHAT I'VE LEARNED

**More than just a money manager, our foundation centers on learning.**

*By Janice Bradley*

Raising money and giving grants is a mission of the Learning Forward Foundation, but its work is based on the principles of continuous learning.

## RESEARCH

### RESEARCH REVIEW

**Study offers keen insights into professional development research.**

*By Joellen Killion*

Mary Kennedy takes a rigorous look at research on professional development in K-12 U.S. schools over four decades.

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