

THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

Reflecting on practice

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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.

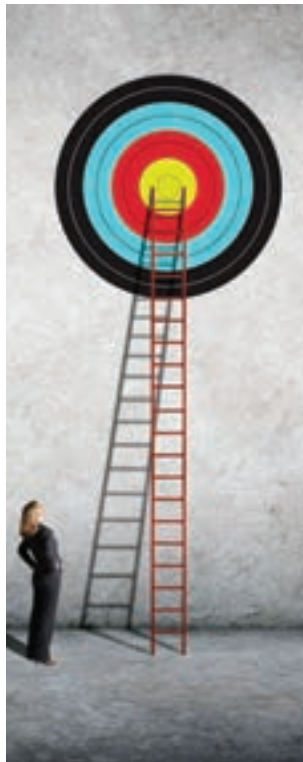
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Empowering Global Citizens Through Education, Innovation and Reform



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Leading & Learning From Partnerships and Relationships That Achieve Transformation



HAHRIE HAN
Change, Agency & Learning: Moving to Action

SELECTED THOUGHT LEADERS

ANDY HARGREAVES
MICHAEL FULLAN
Little Big Change

ANDREAS SCHLEICHER
Learning From TALIS and PISA: What We Learn From Teachers

JULIA KAUFMAN
TRICIA MCMANUS
GLENN PETHEL
Building a Pipeline of Effective Principals: Learning From Urban Districts

PAUL LEMAHIEU
Networked Communities Engaged in Improvement Science: How We Can Get Better at Getting Better

STEPHANIE JONES
Navigating Social Emotional Learning From the Inside Out

STEVE FINK
How Much Do Your School Leaders Know About Improving Teaching and Learning?

THOMAS ARNETT
Teaching In the Machine Age

MAUREEN MCLAUGHLIN
Global Competencies Framework

DOUGLAS REEVES
THOMAS GUSKEY
All Evidence Is Not Created Equal: Advocating For Better Educational Research

ERIC HIRSCH
Curriculum Matters: The State of the Materials Market

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HERE WE GO Tracy Crow

A daily practice of reflection can extend our learning

While I'm excited that the focus of this issue — Reflecting on Practice — allows us to explore the many opportunities educators have to take a close look at how they teach, I want to flip that phrase and consider what it means when we practice reflecting.

The pace of this 24/7 world doesn't lend itself to reflection, yet we're more in need of the practice of reflection than ever. Reflection is an opportunity to make meaning of what we experience, and without explicit attention to its practice, experiences can flow by and be quickly forgotten as the next priority pops up. The Standards for Professional Learning include reflection as a critical part of the Learning Communities standard, within the cycle of continuous improvement; within the Learning Designs standard, where reflection is often part of effective learning strategies; and in the Implementation standard, where reflection is a critical form of feedback for self and others.

What might the practice of reflection look like in a busy professional's work week? Here are a few strategies to consider:

Reflection as an element of planning: As you make your to-do list for the day or week, build in time — even as little as five minutes — at the beginning and end of each day to make note of how you spent your time, where you were successful, what you might celebrate, where you found



unexpected challenges or surprises, and what you learned. A couple of minutes of reflection at the beginning of your day allows you to remind yourself of lessons learned as you look ahead to the day's priorities.

Reflection as part of conversations or meetings: While careful agendas and team norms help to make a group's collaborative work more productive, time for reflection at the end of meetings can help a team function at higher levels as well as serve as reminders of promises made. Reflection might be as simple as asking whether the team followed its norms and where it might need to

improve in the future, or asking team members to share a question or feeling they have as they leave.

Reflection on new information: Many learning designs build in reflection as an integral part of a learning experience. Taking time to reflect after reading an article, engaging in a facilitated meeting, or watching a video can help learners make their thinking explicit and raise questions for themselves or others. For some learners, writing in a journal may serve this purpose well. For others, a two- or three-way conversation might be a valuable way to extend their learning. Debriefing with others can bring new perspectives to consider and open learners' eyes to new understandings.

We invite you to find other ways of practicing reflection throughout this issue of *The Learning Professional*. We're also eager to hear what works for you! Please get in touch any time.

Special note to readers: We apologize for the delay in your member publications while we experience staffing transitions. We said goodbye recently to Eric Celeste as editor of *The Learning Professional* and we look forward to what comes next.

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

THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

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VOICES



HOW DOES SHE RESPOND TO A CONFERENCE?

Some learners may find they are energized by ... (a conference), given their own learning preferences and career stage. Others may be overwhelmed or unable to make meaning from such opportunities and should have other options available for scanning information and expertise.

ARE CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS VALID AND EFFECTIVE? p. **10**





CALL TO ACTION

Stephanie Hirsh

Greatness is within the grasp of every teacher

As part of my participation in the Redesign PD Partnership, I had the opportunity to learn from Brian Dassler, an amazing educator and deputy chancellor in the Florida Department of Education. Dassler, who died suddenly in March, advocated for a deep appreciation of the complexity of teaching. He challenged us to describe great teaching, and I realized that talking knowledgeably about what makes teaching effective isn't something that even experienced experts in education can all do.

Great teaching does not occur by accident. It is developed through an intentional process that ideally includes study, practice, feedback, reflection, and more practice. It is a continuous improvement process that defines the core work of our most successful teachers. Reflecting on these conversations with Dassler leads me to ask: How do we ensure all teachers have the opportunity to develop a profound understanding of teaching?

Considering this question led me to wonder about a particular finding in *The State of Teacher Professional Learning*, a survey Learning Forward conducted with Corwin and NEA. Just over half of teachers who responded said they have "some say" in decisions about their professional development. My assumption is that teachers responding to this question focused on professional development that was planned and executed at the district or school level.

I wonder if there is another way to ask

Find *The State of Teacher Professional Learning* at www.learningforward.org/teacher-report.

this question and potentially shift some of that responsibility to include more teachers. There are many ways teachers can engage in powerful professional learning that do not require approval from another person and that demonstrate the power of self-directed learning.

Engaging in such learning, both as individuals and in teams, can lead to teachers gaining responsibility for planning and executing professional learning that impacts teams, schools, and entire systems. More importantly, the kinds of learning I am talking about potentially have the most impact on what happens for students every day.

I have never met a teacher who does not want the very best for the students in her charge. I have met teachers who are frustrated because they do not have the tools or expertise to address the diverse needs of their students. I have met teachers who are looking for support in addressing some of their greatest challenges. I have met teachers who, while content with their student results, believe there are things they could do to get even better outcomes.

Every teacher has the ultimate authority to ensure she is the very best teacher she can be, and the central responsibility associated with that is to understand the complexities of skillful and effective teaching. Every teacher has the authority to engage in professional

learning that focuses on this priority.

Every teacher can develop a professional growth plan to strengthen teaching expertise, determine learning priorities, and set a plan of actions to address them. Supervisors, coaches, and peers can be great sources of support.

Every teacher can ask for feedback and support about how to improve her teaching. When teachers can't access feedback from peers, coaches, or supervisors, there are other sources to tap, including online services and communities, external partners, and students.

Every teacher can set aside regular time for reflection on teaching. There are countless tools to assist teachers in capturing their practice in the classroom and protocols to support reflection. Student work and surveys can also provide rich material for deep reflection.

While debates will continue about who has the authority to allocate district time and dollars for professional learning, it gives me hope to know that, ultimately, teachers have authority and autonomy over the most important purpose for professional learning: improving their practice so that more students achieve better outcomes. Learning Forward is committed to supporting our stakeholders in achieving this purpose through resources, information, and services.

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



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ASK

Michelle Bowman King

Are conferences and workshops valid and effective?

Q In our district we have been redefining what professional learning looks like, transitioning to more job-embedded, school-based learning supported by coaches or in some cases school leaders or lead teachers. Given how the Standards for Professional Learning describe effective professional learning, not to mention the definition of professional development in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), I'm wondering whether conferences and workshops still have a role in how we support educators? What can we do to make sure that learning from such standalone experiences has an impact?

As the organization that established the Standards for Professional Learning at the same time that we offer a conference and institutes, this is a question we compel ourselves to examine periodically, particularly when we're designing the program for an event we intend to have lasting outcomes for educators and students. There are several elements for potential participants to consider in making sure that conference learning can be a meaningful part of an overall professional learning plan.

First, what is the purpose of any particular learning experience? As the Learning Designs standard makes clear, the desired outcome of the learning is critical to determining the most appropriate learning design or strategy. Conference or workshop learning in many cases may be more appropriate for building awareness or knowledge than for other purposes such as supporting the transformation of practices. But at the same time, that depends on the content, the facilitator, and the learner.

The disposition of the learner is important to take into account. If a participant is starting on a learning journey and eager to make connections

Each issue, we ask a learning professional to answer your professional learning questions. This issue's response comes from Michelle Bowman King (michelle.bowman@learningforward.org), Learning Forward associate director of communities.

and gather information about a particular topic, a conference can offer multiple opportunities to taste new ideas and meet potential colleagues. Some learners may find they are energized by such an environment, given their own learning preferences and career stage. Others may be overwhelmed or unable to make meaning from such opportunities and should have other options available for scanning information and accessing expertise.

It's also important to remember that not all conference learning is identical. Within one conference, sessions will vary in levels of active engagement, facilitation styles, or opportunities for reflection or participant collaboration. Learning Forward's own conference covers the gamut of options, with lecture-style

learning, networking sessions, and both full-day and shorter sessions designed with intense learner engagement in mind. We hope that our keynotes inspire, as do most organizations that offer high-profile speakers from the big stage. Each variation in opportunity offers different benefits, and potential drawbacks as well, depending on what participants hope to gain by attending. For example, while inspiration can light a spark that leads to longer-term knowledge- and skill-building, if a keynote goes in one ear and out the other, it may not be helpful.

Participants can bolster the benefits of conference learning by how they engage during the conference, particularly when they tailor their engagement to what they understand about their own learning preferences. For example, some participants will deepen their learning when they schedule time to journal for themselves or reflect online about their experiences. Learners who attend with colleagues may benefit from daily debriefs to share insights and commit to next actions.

What happens before and after a conference or workshop is just as important as what happens onsite for a participant. Before a conference,



What happens before and after a conference or workshop is just as important as what happens onsite for a participant.

participants generally have the option to make choices about the sessions they will attend, matching what they understand about a session with a need they know they have. With the right conference, the learning may complement ongoing, embedded learning, for example, if educators find options to learn about strategies they've identified in a learning team cycle of improvement. Educators also may have the opportunity to attend conferences with teammates. In such cases, they can plan to either attend sessions together, knowing that different learners will bring different perspectives to a session, or they can choose to divide

and conquer to cover more ground at an event.

After a workshop or conference, educators are more likely to experience lasting benefits — and see changes in practice — if they have sustained support for new learning at their worksite. For some learners, this may mean that experts at home, whether in their building or colleagues from the district office, are available to co-teach using new strategies or observe and offer feedback. For others, support may come in the form of networking with other educators who experienced the conference or with team members

taking deliberate actions to extend what they learned. Some educators may find this networking opportunity online as well as on their campuses. For still others, bringing the learning home may mean enlisting outside vendors to help a team or district go deep on a new initiative or strategy.

Ultimately, we believe that conference and workshop learning does have a role to play in an effective professional learning plan, and it doesn't happen by accident. Planning, onsite engagement, and ongoing support are essential to making conference learning meaningful. ■



OUR TAKE

Melinda George

Educators have the clout to carry our message to Congress

In March 2017, the education community woke to a daunting professional learning crisis: The Trump Administration's 2018 budget proposed elimination of the Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants Program (Title II, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act). As educators face increasingly higher demands for student outcomes in a more diverse population, it's astonishing that the administration would even consider eliminating the only dedicated source of federal funding for professional learning and educator support.

For several months, Learning Forward has been asking each of you to help us contact every member of the U.S. Congress to let them know how critical Title IIA funds are to your work, your students, and your communities. If this is the first time you've been directly asked to advocate for any cause, you may be asking, "Who, me? What could I possibly share that would be of interest to lawmakers?" I'm here to tell you that you are perfect for this job.

As experts in education and as voters, you are exactly the right messengers to help lawmakers understand that Title IIA funding is critical to our country's educational and economic success.

Lawmakers are not often educators, and their insight (and that of their staff) is limited to their own experiences as students. The educational climate has changed since they, and likely even since their children have been in school. Your voice, impact data, and stories can help them appreciate what is actually



Your participation is already making a difference — we have confirmation from Senate staff that they are hearing from our community.

Learn more about advocating for Title II and increased spending caps at www.learningforward.org/advocacy.

happening in today's classrooms, schools, and communities. You are particularly qualified to highlight where real needs exist.

Members of Congress and their staff want to hear from you whether they support Title IIA funding or are opposed to it. As supporters, they will use your experiences to make the case for Title IIA funding amongst their colleagues. If they are opposed, they need to understand clearly what the consequences would be if this critical funding were eliminated. We're turning our efforts toward asking Congress to increase overall spending caps so that enough money is available within the budget to support Title IIA going into the future.

Your participation is already making a difference — we have confirmation from Senate staff that they are hearing from our community about Title IIA. And, thanks in part to your powerful stories, the Senate included level funding for Title IIA in their version of the appropriations bill. But this is an ongoing battle, not simply a one-time fight. We all need to be vigilant and determined to see this through for the long-term. Whether for Title II or for other education priorities, we will always need to make the case that professional learning requires ongoing, significant support whether at the national, provincial, state, or local levels. Thank you for bringing your clout to the conversation.

Melinda George (melinda.george@learningforward.org) is Learning Forward's director of policy and partnerships. ■



WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Janice Bradley

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

Looking back over my past year as a board member for the Learning Forward Foundation, I realize that I am more than a member of a foundation, I am part of a learning culture.

When I joined the foundation, I thought that I would be a member of a traditional funding organization, a non-profit that raised money and awarded grants and scholarships for educators interested in professional learning. We would help educators through fundraising and by providing resources to advance their learning. We would meet as an organization yearly to manage work, ensure financial viability, and feel positive about our contributions to others. However, I've realized that the foundation has transformed from more than "just a foundation" that raises and awards money, to a dynamic learning culture guided by a vision to educate, innovate, and transform professional learning, first advancing our organizational learning internally, then supporting learning in collaboration with others.

HOW DID THE LEARNING FORWARD FOUNDATION ADOPT A CULTURE OF LEARNING?

We've taken five paths this year to promote dynamic learning within the foundation.

1 The foundation looks inside to develop shared meaning and visioning and creates coherence with the Learning Forward vision and

ABOUT THE LEARNING FORWARD FOUNDATION

The foundation offers grants and scholarships to support learning leaders. Just as important, foundation board members accompany that financial support with coaching, assisting grantees with setting clear goals and ensuring their work has an impact on the educators and students they serve.

Contribute to the foundation throughout the year at www.learningforward.org/foundation. Read about past grantees and preview the scholarship and grant opportunities that will be available early in 2018.

mission. As part of Learning Forward, the foundation designs intentional connections to align our vision and mission — "Educate, Innovate, and Transform Professional Learning" by "supporting the development of educators' capacity to improve student learning through innovation and improvement that transforms professional learning," with the Learning Forward vision, "Excellent teaching and learning every day," and its mission "to build the capacity of leaders to establish and sustain highly effective professional learning." Deliberately aligned visions and missions strengthen the ability of both Learning Forward and the foundation to act interdependently as a

system moving toward impact on raising student performance through highly effective professional learning for adults.

2 The foundation cultivates continual commitment to improvement and reflection. When the foundation meets twice yearly for two-day retreats and monthly for committee work, we engage in essential management and business tasks and we also learn together. I'm always reading articles, sharing conversations with thought leaders, participating in shared conversations through touchpoint conversations with awardees, and engaging in structured conversations during meetings. The foundation intentionally uses a process for creating desired results. We have a goal in mind, we are committed to work together to attain it, and then we think deeply about the results. What happened? What is the evidence? What needs to change to advance the mission and vision?

3 The foundation environment maintains effective leadership through collaboration that encourages different people to influence decisions and change, rather than a traditional hierarchy. Our current leadership structure encourages behaviors that facilitate learning – risk taking, learning with others, and individual reflection. We value collaborative learning experiences, as exemplified by the norms and ways we converse that allow each foundation member to question key assumptions

Through attentive listening, we have the ability to analyze the thoughts and passions of others, which strengthens our collaboration for shared vision and professional relationships.



critical to shared work. For example, we collaborate using the “Graduate School of Norms” and during each meeting, the foundation’s current chair, Audrey Hobbs-Johnson, begins and sometimes ends each meeting inviting every member to thoughtfully consider which norm was used to support effective information transfer during the meeting. It is clear that each foundation member has an important role in contributing to leading change within the foundation.

4 **The foundation environment practices attentive listening, meaning thinking and acting in ways that connect each other fully without multitasking.** One of the norms is, “listen with full attention” that allows us insight into each other’s thinking, and an opportunity for richer engagement in the content and intent of the speaker’s

message. Through attentive listening, we have the ability to analyze the thoughts and passions of others, which strengthens our collaboration for shared vision and professional relationships.

5 **The foundation moves from knowing from research and knowledge of professional learning, to living the experience with others.** After awarding grants and scholarships to educators, our task turns to supporting awardees on their journeys using the Standards for Professional Learning to guide change and improvement in their contexts. We needed to shift from “talking about the standards from afar” to understanding how the standards are experienced, in order to for us to better serve as authentic guides for awardees. Through the touchpoint process, a community space for awardees to reflect

on implementation of their change project, we learned in partnership through the awardees’ lived experience how standards are enacted and used to create impact.

As a result of participating in the foundation as a member of a culture of learning, not only am I contributing in collaboration to educating, innovating, and transforming professional learning for other educators and students, I have made my own transformation as a leader of professional learning, and am looking forward to the next year with hope, opportunity, and possibility.

Janice Bradley is a member of the Learning Forward Foundation, vice-chair of the Research and Support Committee. ■

Examine. Study. Understand.

RESEARCH

PERSONALIZED
LEARNING IN
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
p. **22**



CHALLENGE ASSUMPTIONS

Mary Kennedy challenges some basic assumptions about professional learning research, including its design and its focus on the common features of professional learning such as collective participation, content focus, intensity of duration, and learning designs such as professional learning communities and coaching. Further, she questions previous computational approaches that fail to consider variance in the studies and that minimize the ability to compare studies.

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

p. **16**



RESEARCH REVIEW

Joellen Killion

Study offers keen insights into professional development research

► AT A GLANCE

Rethinking how to analyze and conduct research on professional development yields new insights to inform practice.

► THE STUDY

Kennedy, M. (2016). How does professional development improve teaching? *Review of Educational Research*, 86(4), 945-980.

•
Joellen Killion (joellen.killion@learningforward.org) is senior advisor to Learning Forward. In each issue of *The Learning Professional*, Killion explores a recent research study to help practitioners understand the impact of particular professional learning practices on student outcomes.

► WHAT THE STUDY SAYS

A new approach to analyzing professional development research provides both researchers and education practitioners useful information to guide their practice.

STUDY DESCRIPTION

Mary Kennedy conducts a review and analysis of the research on professional development in K-12 U.S. schools in the core content areas published since 1975.

Acknowledging that past reviews of professional development research based on its core features have insufficiently considered the variance in research designs and professional development content and design, Kennedy approaches the review with different theories of action about how professional development influences teacher learning and enactment of learning in practice.

The analysis yields a graphical as well as a statistical representation of effects that allows for alternative comparison of studies across contexts and for various types of interpretation. Kennedy's review sorts programs based on their theories of action. The theories of action include the core problems of practice the professional development addresses and the pedagogical approaches to teacher learning that supports and leads to enactment of learning.

QUESTIONS

Kennedy seeks to answer several questions.

- How do different professional development programs influence teacher learning?
- What problems of practice do professional development programs aim to address?
- What pedagogical approaches do professional development programs use to facilitate enactment or application of the content?
- What insights does a new approach to computing and displaying effect size of professional development studies between 1975 and 2014 that mitigates variances in studies of differing sample sizes, research designs, statistical analyses, and units of analysis offer researchers and practitioners?

METHODOLOGY

Kennedy conducted a search for experimental studies of professional development in core academic content areas (literacy, math, sciences, and social studies) within K-12 U.S. schools between 1975 and 2014. She established the review criteria as studies:

1. Of professional development only and excluded those with concomitant supports, such as curriculum or technology;
2. Conducted in the U.S.

“We need to ensure that PD promotes real learning rather than merely adding more noise to their working environment.”

— *Mary Kennedy*



only to accommodate the unique context of education, namely the lack of a national curriculum;

3. With evidence of student achievement either on distal measures of student achievement such as standardized assessments or state tests, coded as M1 outcomes, or proximal program-specific assessments of student achievement, coded as M2 outcomes;
4. With controls for teacher motivation to learn, namely voluntary participation versus mandatory participation;
5. With a minimum duration of one year; and

6. That follow teachers over time, rather than students.

The search yielded 28 studies to include in the analysis. Kennedy then designed a method for computing an estimate of program effects that accounted for sample size, unit of analysis, research design, and the study’s statistical procedures to minimize variance in effect sizes across studies.

ANALYSIS

Kennedy sorted the professional development programs included in the 28 studies based on two aspects of their theories of action, the program’s content and its approach to enacting the learning. The four content strands relate to the common problems of practice that challenge teachers:

portraying the content to students so that they can learn it; managing student behavior; enlisting student participation; and exposing students’ thinking to assess learning.

The second criterion for sorting professional development programs was the program’s approach to facilitating enactment — that is, the strategy the program employed to assist teachers in applying the ideas within their practice. Kennedy identified four approaches to enactment:

1. **Prescription**, which “explicitly describe or demonstrate ... the best way for teachers to address particular teaching problem” (p. 955) and with the expectation that teachers would follow the specific way with limited

► WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PRACTITIONERS

Kennedy addresses some basic assumptions about professional learning research, including its design and its focus on the common features of professional learning such as collective participation, content focus, intensity of duration, and learning designs such as professional learning communities and coaching.

Further, she questions previous computational approaches that fail to consider variance in the studies and that minimize the ability to compare studies. What her work offers practitioners are insights that relate to four of Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011): professional learning's content (Outcomes standard); design (Learning Designs); approach to enactment (Implementation); and evaluation (Data).

Outcomes. Kennedy notes four areas related to common issues teachers experience in their classrooms and suggests that professional learning in any one area or all is likely to lead to increases in student achievement.

The Outcomes standard notes that the content of professional learning is related to student learning needs as defined by the content standards, educator learning needs as defined by their performance expectations, and programmatic or system needs as defined by strategic initiatives. The four areas of portraying content, managing student behavior, gaining participation, and exposing student thinking are common elements in teacher performance appraisal criteria.

Narrowing the focus of teacher professional learning to these four high-impact areas may be advisable and for leaders who are responsible for supporting teachers to gain expertise in these areas, especially, as Kennedy notes, in a

time when teachers face multiple competing demands. She states, "We need to ensure that PD promotes real learning rather than merely adding more noise to their working environment" (p. 974).

Learning Designs. This study, because it allows comparison across programs based on their approach to enactment, provides useful information to practitioners about the selection of learning designs and guidance for specific designs such as professional learning communities and coaching.

Kennedy urges researchers to "move past the concept of learning communities per se and begin examining the content such groups discuss and the nature of the intellectual work they are engaged in" (p. 972). The studies that included PLCs indicate that reading and engaging in facilitated discussions about the implications of research, for example, has a higher effect size than looking at students' achievement or their classroom practice without any guidance.

Coaching that uses a prescriptive approach has a lower effect size than coaching that uses the strategies or insights approach to enact learning. High-leverage designs for professional learning are the strategies and insights approach with prescription and body of knowledge having lesser effects.

Using common theories of action about how teachers learn and teacher motivation in professional learning program design and research can not only improve the results of professional learning, but also provide more useful information.

Implementation. The study suggests that multiyear programs have a greater effect size than those with a single year. While teachers don't have contact with the program in the second or third year necessarily, there is continued

2. **Strategies**, which is defining goals teachers seek to achieve and providing "a collection of illustrative practices that will achieve the goals" (p. 955);
3. **Insights**, which is "raising provocative questions that force teachers to re-examine familiar events and come to see them differently" so that teachers are making sound decisions and using professional judgment in classroom situations (p. 955);

4. **Body of knowledge**, which is developing "knowledge that is organized into a coherent body of interrelated concepts and principles and that can be summarized in books, diagrams, and lectures" and that gives teachers "maximum discretion regarding whether and how teachers would do anything with that knowledge" (p. 956). Kennedy also considered how teachers were assigned to control

and treatment groups for each study. When assignment to groups was not comparable, such as mandatory for both treatment and control groups or voluntary for both, she excluded the studies to ensure commonality in teacher motivation to learn.

Kennedy organizes the 28 studies that meet the established criteria by the four common challenges teachers face. Fifteen studies address portraying content; two address student behavior; five address enlisting participation; and six address exposing student

following of the teachers' enactment of the learning and student achievement.

Measuring enactment and student achievement over time provides evidence that teacher learning is incremental and occurs over time. Learning Forward's Implementation standard calls for sustained, differentiated, classroom-based support over time to ensure enactment of learning. It also calls for ongoing, constructive feedback. Constructive feedback aligns with the strategies and insights approach to enactment of learning. For more information, see *The Feedback Process: Transforming Feedback for Professional Learning* (Learning Forward, 2015).

Data. The study calls for measuring enactment and student achievement over time. Learning Forward's Data standard calls for both formative and summative evaluation of professional learning using multiple forms and sources of data. This study suggests that the evaluation of professional learning occur over multiple years, a possible consideration for future revision of the standards for professional learning.

Other insights for practitioners include:

Motivation to learn. A prerequisite for professional learning, according to Learning Forward (2011), is "each educator involved in professional learning comes to the experience ready to learn" (p. 15). Comparing professional learning programs based on voluntary or mandatory assignment to treatment and control yields insights about the potential for negative effects not because of the quality of the learning experience, but rather because of learners' motivation to learn.

This study calls on practitioners to examine and address learners' motivation to learn for positive results and to reduce negative emotional effects that cause resistance or

resentment to the professional learning program. Kennedy reminds readers that attendance may be mandatory, yet learning is not. Future revisions of the standards might need to address learner motivation more explicitly.

Provider expertise and experience. Kennedy notes that studies with higher effect sizes are those whose providers have extensive practical experience and have expertise and experience in teacher learning, content, and pedagogy related to enacting learning. Providers' readiness, qualifications, and depth of expertise and experience influence the results of professional learning. Provider qualifications is another consideration for future revision of the standards.

Kennedy challenges some rudimentary assumptions long held in the field of professional learning and calls for actions that will both improve practice and the usefulness of research. "We need to replace our current conception of 'good' PD as comprising a collection of particular design features with a conception that is based on more nuanced understanding of what teachers do, what motivates them, and how they learn and grow. We also need to reconceptualize teachers as people with their own motivations and interests" (p. 974). As such, teachers deserve professional learning approaches that are intellectually rigorous about content meaningful to them rather than prescriptions and bodies of knowledge.

REFERENCE

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

thinking. She extends the summary by adding the approach to enacting the learning. Eight of the 28 studies use the prescription approach; 10 use strategies; seven use insights; and three use body of knowledge.

Kennedy displays the effects of each study in two graphical displays. In the first, using size, shapes, and color to denote descriptors of the studies such as its effects over time, sample size, type of outcome measure, unit of analysis, and post-professional development follow-up, she displays the effects of the

15 studies focused on the challenge of portraying curriculum content.

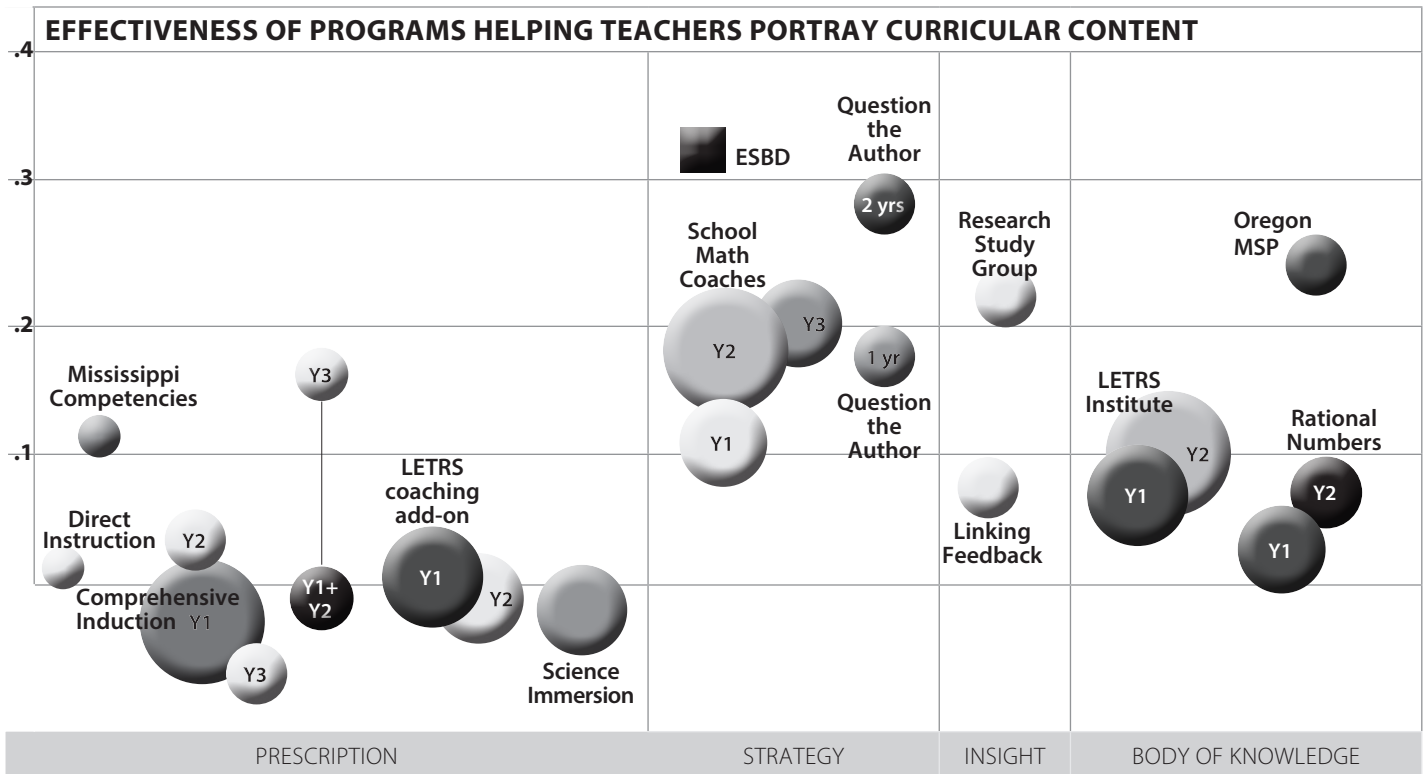
They are clustered together along the x-axis by their approach to enactment of learning, moving from prescription that limits teacher decision-making and judgment about enactment of learning to body of knowledge that provides the greatest amount of teacher choice to enact learning. Along the y-axis is the computed effect size. The graphical display, as Kennedy notes, makes it possible to compare programs within

and across content and approaches to enact learning.

In the second display, Kennedy uses the same size, shape, and color to denote the programs' descriptions to display the programs addressing each of the four challenge areas clustered together along the x-axis and their effect size on the y-axis.

RESULTS

Kennedy's computation and graphic display provide information about the programs that allows for comparison,



Source: Kennedy, M. (2016), *Review of Educational Research*, 86(4), 945-980. doi: 10.3102/003465431562. Reproduced with permission by Corwin.

interpretation, hypothesizing about interactions, and identifying implications for practitioners and researchers to consider.

For example, in the first display of programs focused on portraying curriculum content, programs with greater duration or program level of effort and state-of-the-art research design tend to show less effect on student achievement. Kennedy suggests this may be because of the prescriptive nature of the programs and their mandatory assignment. She hypothesizes that mandatory assignment, a trademark of most large-scale, high-duration programs, may reduce teachers' motivation to learn.

The overall display in the first figure depicts an inverted U-shape, suggesting that programs using strategy and insights as the enactment approach, those in the middle between prescription on the left and body of knowledge on the right, have a greater effect size than either of those

GUIDE TO READING THE GRAPHICAL DISPLAY

- Each icon in the graphic display portrays a unique program, clustered into the three different types of programs.
- Circles indicate programs with M1 measures of student achievement, such as standardized assessments that are more distal to the program goals; the square represents a program with an M2 measure of student achievement that is more specific or proximal to the program goals.
- The size of the icon indicates the number of teachers involved in the program. For example, School Math Coaches had 418 participating teachers compared to Linking Feedback that had 81.
- When the program occurred over multiple years, each year of the program is displayed and indicates as Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3, as in the case of School Math Coaches.
- The darkness is a representation of the program intensity as determined by the amount of time teachers engaged in professional development. Linking Feedback involved three hours of professional development compared to 67 hours for Rational Numbers.
- The icons closer to the top of the display have larger effect sizes than those at the bottom. The display provides opportunities to compare and hypothesize about the effects of different types of professional development programs.

categories.

Body of knowledge enactment has a higher effect size than prescription. Programs that had multiyear follow-up tend to have higher effect sizes than

programs without follow-up.

In this latter group of studies, teachers did not necessarily have contact with the program after year one, yet their enactment of learning

and student achievement was followed. If coaching is included, coaching that emphasizes strategy and insights tends to be more successful than prescription-oriented coaching.

Kennedy notes that teacher practice, as previous research confirms, increases incrementally over time. The display also confirms that M2 outcome measures, those more closely aligned to program content and goals, have greater effect sizes than those that use more general measures of student achievement.

Kennedy summarizes the first display by noting that prescription as an approach to enactment has the lowest effect, with body of knowledge next, insight next, and strategy the highest for the studies addressing the challenge of portraying content.

Studies with mandatory assignment have lower effect sizes as do larger-scale studies than other studies. The overall effect size is .10 for these 15 studies and, when the studies that used mandatory assignment are removed, the effect size rises to .16.

The studies in this cluster are all below .2, and Kennedy notes that higher effect sizes in other reviews are likely distorted by the variance in the sample size, research design, statistical analysis, and professional development content and approach.

The second display includes all the programs clustered by the challenges their content addresses. Using the same symbols to depict each program, clustered along the x-axis by their challenge area and excluding those programs with mandatory assignment in the portraying content section, Kennedy makes it easy to compare programs based on participant assignment to treatment group.

The differences in effect size introduce the possibility, Kennedy suggests, that social motivation, in which the participants desire to support the researcher rather than perceive a

Mary Kennedy emphasizes that programs that acknowledge the incremental growth of teachers and include a follow-up measure have larger effect sizes.

need to improve their practice or learn something new, may be at play in instances where effect size is larger and where there is follow-up with teachers.

She specifically points to programs that had a negative effect, and posits that such a negative emotional response may be resistance to the program's demands. Programs in the areas of enlisting participation and exposing student thinking tended to be more strategy- and insight-based and have larger effect sizes, especially in their second year, than other programs.

In concluding about the second display, Kennedy notes that programs in any of the four challenge areas are likely to improve student achievement, suggesting that no one area is more important than another. All contribute to improved practice and student success.

Kennedy explains how the approach she used for analysis of the effect size of the 28 studies differs from the more traditional analysis of professional development studies using the common features of intensity, collective participation, content knowledge, and coaching.

She challenges basic assumptions in each area with studies she included and calls upon researchers to go beyond the surface features to examine more closely the specific content of and approach to enactment using the theories of action she articulates and teacher

motivation to learn as significant factors in the success of professional development. She also notes that how coaching, a relatively common feature in professional learning today, supports enactment influences the effect size.

She calls on researchers to examine more closely professional development providers' content and pedagogical knowledge and their approach to enacting learning. She notes that more effective programs included in the 28 studies had providers with established histories of working with teachers, direct experience in the classroom, and expertise with the content and teacher learning.

She emphasizes that programs that acknowledge the incremental growth of teachers and include a follow-up measure have larger effect sizes.

LIMITATIONS

Kennedy introduces a new way to analyze the effects of professional development research that challenges the What Works Clearinghouse standards for research design and demonstrates that research in professional development that follows the recommended high-level evidence standards are less effective than studies that are smaller scale and use voluntary assignment. As she notes, other factors not examined in the traditional professional development research, such as motivation to learn and provider attributes, may influence results.

Kennedy does not include the specific effect size for each study based on her computation. The effect size is portrayed in the graphical display, yet including the specific number in the table would be a helpful reference for readers. Overall, the computation of effect size produces small numbers for each study, which may lead some to question the value of professional development in general based on the small effect sizes. ■

ESSENTIALS

■ AN INSIDE LOOK AT SCHOOLS

Busting the Myth of 'One-Size-Fits-All'
Public Education

Center for Public Education, September 2017

The Center for Public Education examines access to options within the public education system. The report first estimates how many students are able to choose which public school to attend,



regardless of whether they take advantage of the opportunity.

Using data from the federal Schools and Staffing Survey, the report then documents the prevalence of various program choices inside public schools and, where possible, compares these to private schools.

The report concludes with a discussion of growing efforts by public schools to personalize learning. Included is a list of questions for school leaders who want to expand or improve options for students.

www.centerforpubliceducation.org/mythbusting

■ SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Navigating Social and Emotional Learning From the Inside Out

Harvard Graduate School of Education, March 2017

The report looks at 25 top social and emotional learning programs to identify and summarize key features

and attributes of programming for elementary age children, addressing the need for information about curricula and implementation to help schools and out-of-school time providers make informed decisions.

Worksheets and summary tables are included to help users apply social and emotional learning program data to their own context. Other key features include:

- Background information on social and emotional learning and its benefits;
- A summary of the evidence base for each of the 25 programs; and
- Recommendations for adapting the programs for out-of-school time settings.



and attributes of programming for elementary age children, addressing the need for information about

■ HOW ARE SCHOOLS DOING?

The 49th Annual PDK Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools

Kappan, September 2017

Highlights from the 2017 PDK poll include:

- Americans want schools to focus on career and personal skills to ensure that students are prepared for life after high school.
- Substantially more Americans oppose than support school vouchers.
- Most parents value racial/ethnic and economic diversity in schools — but they don't believe it's worth a longer commute to school.
- Parents say standardized tests don't measure what's important to them, and they put such tests at the bottom of a list of indicators of school quality.
- Most public school parents expect their child to attend college full time, but that may not mean a four-year college.



<http://pdkpoll.org/>

■ LEARNER-CENTERED SCHOOLS

Leadership Competencies for Learner-Centered, Personalized Education

Jobs for the Future and the Council of Chief State School Officers, September 2017

This report is intended to serve as a first step in identifying the knowledge, skills, and dispositions leaders must master in order to build and sustain learner-centered, personalized schools and learning environments.

Learner-centered refers to four specific practices that together show strong evidence of success in preparing students for college, careers, and civic life: personalized learning, competency-based education, anytime/anywhere learning opportunities, and student ownership.

These competencies are designed specifically for education leaders. A companion resource focuses on the educators closest to and responsible for students' day-to-day learning.




http://ccsso.org/Resources/Publications/Leadership_Competencies_for_Learner-Centered_Personalized_Education.html

Inform. Engage. Immerse.

FOCUS

REFLECTING ON PRACTICE



I see myself giving students the right answer. If I'm not always processing and thinking, sometimes I end up feeding them the correct answer. But then sometimes it's in my head: 'No! Don't give them the answer. OK, well what can I do?' and I know I should use those 'what,' 'why,' and 'how' questions as opposed to giving them the answer."

— **Accentuate the formative**, p. **24**

Video offers an unedited opportunity to see classroom practices through the eyes of the teacher, capturing visual and auditory occurrences without a filter. Teachers notice things on the video that they may not have noticed in the moment."

— **Replay, reflect, refine**, p. **40**



Theron Blakeslee, left, and Lauri Bach, an 8th-grade U.S. history teacher in Kingsley, Michigan, review the video of her teaching.

ACCENTUATE THE FORMATIVE

MICHIGAN
TEACHERS
USE RUBRICS
AND VIDEO TO
IMPROVE THEIR
PRACTICE

BY THERON BLAKESLEE, DENNY CHANDLER,
EDWARD ROEBER, AND TARA KINTZ

Formative assessment is one of the most effective tools that teachers use to promote student learning, and watching yourself teach on video is one of the most effective ways to improve your teaching. As part of a project for the Michigan Department of Education, we worked with eight teachers in Michigan who are using videos of their teaching to improve their use of formative assessment practices.

In this article, we describe one of the rubrics we used and highlight some of the improvements that the teachers in our project discovered for themselves through this process. We also discuss how the learning teams we worked with are moving toward facilitating their own enhanced professional learning using classroom observations and the

rubrics to provide actionable feedback to each other.

Lauri Bach, 8TH-GRADE U.S. HISTORY

Lauri Bach teaches 8th-grade U.S. history at Kingsley Middle School in Kingsley, Michigan. For the last three years, she has been a member of a school-based learning team studying formative assessment practices with her colleagues.

All teachers in her school are members of a learning team, where teachers read, discuss, and sharpen their ideas about implementing formative assessment.

The Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME) project of the Michigan Department of Education works with teams like this in about 160

5 DIMENSIONS OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

1. PLANNING

- Instructional planning

2. LEARNING TARGETS

- Use of learning targets
- Learning progressions
- Model of proficient achievement

3. ELICITING STUDENT UNDERSTANDING

- Activating prior knowledge
- Eliciting evidence of student understanding
- Teacher questioning strategies
- Rationale for questioning

4. FORMATIVE FEEDBACK

- Feedback from the teacher
- Feedback from peers
- Student self-assessment

5. INSTRUCTIONAL AND LEARNING DECISIONS

- Adjustments to teaching
- Adjustments to learning

districts throughout Michigan. FAME provides support and resources through regional coordinators, with the express purpose of studying and implementing formative assessment practices.

Bach's learning team has been meeting for three years. While teams

RUBRIC: TEACHER QUESTIONING STRATEGIES				
DIMENSION	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
3.3 Teacher questioning strategies	The teacher is generally looking for the correct answer and often produces it if one or two students don't.	The teacher often scaffolds students' thinking to help them produce the correct answer.	The teacher often asks for elaboration or clarification of a student's answer.	The teacher often asks students to explain how they arrived at an answer or how their answer connects to another student's.

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.

So when we suggested to Bach and seven other teachers that we would like to observe in their classrooms, video their teaching, and then use rubrics to analyze and reflect on their teaching, they saw this as an opportunity for formative assessment on their own use of formative assessment.

Bach allowed us to sit in the back of her classroom with a video camera and record one of her classes for five days. Then she joined us later each day to watch portions of the video, talk about her teaching, and use a set of rubrics to determine her level of practice of formative assessment on five dimensions (see box on p. 25).

Bach is a strong teacher, and, not coincidentally, a strong learner. Even though she said she was nervous with the video camera in the back of the room, the first thing she wanted to know when we came together after her class was, “What can I do better?”

As researchers, we were not there to tell her what to do better. Our approach was to facilitate, asking, “Given what we’ve just seen of your teaching, where do you place yourself on each of these rubrics?”

As our discussion progressed and Bach used the rubrics to analyze her teaching, not only did she feel confident that many things she was doing were “right,” she also discovered a few things

she wanted to change. Would these improvements have occurred to her without actually watching herself teach? How reflective can we be about our own teaching when we’re in the middle of it, guiding students through the class period?

OBSERVING TEACHING

The classes we observed were very active and highly engaging for Bach’s students. Woven throughout her lessons were formative assessment strategies that helped her make instructional decisions and encouraged students to take ownership of their learning.

In one lesson we observed, students took on the roles of several Founding Fathers to re-enact the events leading up to the Supreme Court decision of *Marbury v. Madison*, establishing the concept of judicial review. Their learning targets were about developing an awareness of landmark cases and, in particular, an understanding of how the judicial branch of the federal government subsequently gained greater power. The final production at the end of class was short but informative, and students were enthusiastic about the work.

The formative assessment strategy at the end of this class was a self-evaluation of learning from this role-playing activity along with several other activities from the past few days, using scales — student-centered generic rubrics based on the learning targets. Bach’s students self-assess often, tracking their progress over the course of a unit. Bach will ask, after this kind

of self-evaluation, “How well do you think you’re prepared for the test on Monday? Do you think there are some areas for you to work on? If so, come in for extra help during seventh hour.”

These self-assessments aren’t the only piece of formative feedback. Bach provides descriptive, actionable feedback during class and on written assignments, and the students are learning to evaluate each other’s work and give peer feedback.

For example, in one class, students were paired to listen to each other’s warm-ups and offer suggestions for making each other’s work more specific. The task wasn’t particularly successful on the day we observed, but Bach’s reaction was to give students her own feedback on the process and let them know they would continue to practice this.

When we came back to observe a month later, students were asked again to give feedback to their peers. This time they used a rubric to evaluate their partner’s diary entries — a summative activity to show what they had learned about the Industrial Revolution by creating a fictitious diary entry of a young person from that time period about the issues they faced working in the factories.

This time, there were many more instances of students who gave and received actionable feedback, and some could be seen adding to their papers afterwards. This demonstrated the effectiveness of the feedback and practice that Bach gave to the class in the intervening month.

The last activity for the day,

the exit ticket, engages students in metacognition about their learning (i.e. “Tell me some things you did to make your learning go well for you today”). One of the purposes of formative assessment is to give students ways to take more ownership of their learning, and being metacognitive is an important step. We want students to adjust their learning strategies in response to teacher and peer feedback as well as their own self-reflection.

The other purpose of formative assessment is for teachers to adjust instruction based on evidence of student understanding. Bach collects exit tickets and warm-ups to check every student’s progress on almost a daily basis.

On one occasion, she gave as a warm-up: “Tell me one specific thing you learned yesterday about the Industrial Revolution.” She makes decisions about the pace of the class and the necessity for review based on this evidence collected from students.

TEACHER QUESTIONING STRATEGIES

Bach set the tone for our first afternoon session when she entered the room asking, “What can I do better?” As we went through the class activities on video and coded each instance of her use of formative assessment with an appropriate description from the rubrics, she constantly had self-improvement as her frame of mind.

On the first day, she focused on the rubric about teacher questioning strategies (see table on p. 26).

The idea behind this rubric is that some types of questions might provide more insight into a student’s understanding than others, thus giving teachers valuable information for making instructional decisions.

Bach noticed that she often asked questions at level 2 or 3, but rarely at level 4. Given her focus on “doing

It’s not just discussion, and it’s not just reflection on the day’s highs and lows. It is an analysis of the day’s work with rubrics that describe the practices we aim for.

things better,” it wasn’t a surprise to see her trying level 4 questions the next day in class. When the opportunity arose, she asked several students, “How did you come up with that answer?” They seemed to enjoy talking more about their ideas.

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL LEARNING TEAMS

Learning teams like Bach’s need to be structured, planned, and facilitated to meet three conditions necessary for effective adult learning: 1) having a single purpose; 2) using a coach who asks probing questions; and 3) making connections between theory and practice (Kintz, Lane, Gotwals, & Cisterna, 2015).

Michigan’s FAME learning teams satisfy the first condition by focusing on formative assessment. They strive to maintain that focus in each meeting, knowing that it can be tempting to go off agenda to discuss other school issues.

All FAME learning teams have coaches, and many are trained in Cognitive Coaching (Costa & Garmston, 2016) so that they know how to listen and ask probing questions, satisfying the second condition.

The third condition may be the most difficult to achieve. By design, learning teams are places to gather, read, and discuss. Connections between theory and practice may be addressed if teachers bring specific classroom instances to the group and jointly try to solve the problem of how formative assessment can be applied. Still, this is just conversation, not exactly practice.

This is where recording one’s teaching and analyzing it using

formative assessment rubrics becomes very useful, focusing on the connection between practice, as recorded from the day’s lesson, and theory, as embodied in the rubrics.

What makes this approach to professional learning potentially powerful is this connection between theory and practice. It’s not just discussion, and it’s not just reflection on the day’s highs and lows. It is an analysis of the day’s work with rubrics that describe the practices we aim for.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT RUBRICS

The rubrics that teachers in our study have been using were developed over several years by two research teams, one with members from Michigan State University and one sponsored by the Michigan Assessment Consortium, a nonprofit coordinating body promoting effective assessment practices throughout the state.

The rubrics are based on five essential dimensions of formative assessment, each described by one or more subdimensions, as shown in the box on p. 25.

The rubrics do much of the work of guiding discussion with teachers as they reflect on their daily practice. However, we served as knowledgeable colleagues who asked questions that may have moved their reflection forward.

Reviewing one’s teaching and analyzing it using rubrics might work fine for many teachers if they do this work alone. But analysis is enhanced when they do this with a colleague who can ask simple questions such as, “How could you have done that differently?” or “What does that rubric statement

mean to you for your practice?”

Importantly, the colleague is not the evaluator. The evaluation tool is the rubric. The basic questions for self-reflection with rubrics are: “Where am I currently on this hierarchy of practice? Where do I want to be? What can I do to get to that point?” The answers lie in the video of the teacher’s teaching.

INSIGHTS INTO TEACHING

Bach was one of eight teachers in our study. Each of them could have been highlighted in this article because all are strong teachers with similar commitments to improving their practice. Every teacher we worked with gained insights into their teaching through this process.

Some insights, like Bach’s described earlier regarding the types of questions she asks, could be seen as minor adjustments in teaching methods. Her decision to ask a different type of question would not be minor if it results in new insights that can be used to adjust instruction to the benefit of students.

This is what formative assessment is about, making frequent adjustments to teaching or learning strategies to help students move toward deeper understanding of the learning targets for the course.

Frequent adjustments happen only with frequent feedback. Teachers in our research project felt that they were getting their own formative assessment because the process of watching one’s teaching and analyzing it using rubrics provides descriptive, actionable feedback.

As one teacher in the group said, “Adjustments to teaching — this is formative assessment in my mind. You’re always watching and then decide: Do you keep going with your lesson plan because that was your lesson plan, or can you adjust on the fly and change it because of the feedback you’re getting?”

Other examples of teachers’ insights included:

This is what formative assessment is about, making frequent adjustments to teaching or learning strategies to help students move toward deeper understanding of the learning targets for the course.

- “I could make copies of the model research projects that are on the board so students can use them more conveniently.”
- “I could have asked a question at that point to get them to figure it out, rather than telling them.”
- “I see myself giving students the right answer. If I’m not always processing and thinking, sometimes I end up feeding them the correct answer. But then sometimes it’s in my head: ‘No! Don’t give them the answer. OK, well what can I do?’ and I know I should use those ‘what,’ ‘why,’ and ‘how’ questions as opposed to giving them the answer.”

So why not expand the concept of formative assessment to include feedback that teachers get not only from their students, but from their own reflection on a day’s lesson, with or without a colleague to help?

Teachers in our project were experienced professionals who had been working on formative assessment

practices with learning teams and implementing the practices for at least a couple of years. We are very interested in how useful this approach will be with novice teachers, especially those who are just starting to implement formative assessment practices in their classrooms and want feedback.

Also, this approach could be used with any teaching improvement goals, not just formative assessment. We might argue that formal evaluation systems would be fair only if they provided this level of detailed feedback to teachers, with the opportunity for viewing actions that contribute to a certain rating. This would be a fundamental blending of teacher evaluation with professional development.

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LEADING THE WAY IN LITERACY

CLASSROOM VISITS OFFER A COMPREHENSIVE VIEW OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

BY BONNIE HOUCK AND SANDI NOVAK

Schools and districts are required to have improvement plans that specify instructional and curricular ideas to enhance teachers' ongoing practice and assist students in performing at higher levels. Yet little has been done to examine the specific knowledge that principals need regarding literacy teaching and learning

or how districts can build literacy leadership capacity.

Leaders need a system to collect and analyze timely and useful information about current instructional practices in their schools and how students engage and collaborate in the process of learning. These data must be collected consistently for instructional growth and without the intent of using

them to evaluate individual teaching performance.

A BETTER WAY

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



Photo by SANDI NOVAK

Dawn Brown, principal at Washington Learning Center in New Ulm, Minnesota, uses the Literacy Classroom Visit instrument as she gathers data in her school.

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.

Literacy classroom visits are brief,

frequent, informal, and focused visits to classrooms by observers whose purpose is to gather data about teaching practices and engage in collaborative follow-up (Houck & Novak, 2016). Like instructional rounds and three-minute walk-throughs, literacy classroom visits can be conducted in teams and focus on student learning and collaborative discussion around descriptive, nonjudgmental data.

However, they are unique in that they

IMPLEMENTATION TIPS FOR DISTRICT AND SCHOOL LEADERS

To effectively implement literacy classroom visits, district and school leaders must:

- Ensure successful training and ongoing support for conducting literacy classroom visits.
- Provide consistent structures for analyzing literacy classroom visit data to determine professional learning needs and the impact such learning is having on instruction and student learning.
- Model nonevaluative, action-oriented feedback about the literacy classroom visit to teachers to inspire growth and change.
- Offer strategies for providing the professional learning identified by literacy classroom visit data as needed to improve literacy instruction.
- Guide the use of literacy classroom visit data to monitor the implementation of the knowledge and practices gained through professional learning experiences.

concentrate specifically on research-supported practices that have a direct effect on literacy achievement.

The Literacy Classroom Visit Model is also distinctive in terms of how data are collected and analyzed to direct the focus on specific data patterns. These patterns highlight instruction and learning of the community rather than the practices of individuals. Over time,

they reveal evidence of a developing culture of literacy as well as effective practices.

DISTRICT LEADERS' ROLE

Districts are the logical avenue to provide the support school leaders need to improve literacy teaching and learning. Ensuring that schools get what they need without causing undue frustration requires a balanced partnership and clarity between districts and schools. District administrators who create a learning environment based on trust and clearly established norms for collaboration create a culture in which the Literacy Classroom Visit Model can bear fruit.

District leadership, according to Learning Forward's (2011) Standards for Professional Learning, should provide professional learning experiences that enable principals to function as instructional leaders.

With the Literacy Classroom Visit Model, district leaders and principals have distinct, mutually reinforcing roles. The central office assumes responsibility for defining goals and standards for teaching and learning, allocating resources to schools, and providing the supports that principals and teachers need to successfully meet district-established literacy standards.

Principals and teachers are responsible for implementing teaching and learning goals, using school-based professional development resources, and developing strategies for evaluating their progress. District leaders can assist with schools' collection, analysis, and use of literacy classroom visit data for decision making. Specifically, districts can help schools improve the validity, reliability, and relevance of the data collected and provide technical assistance or training in using the data to inform management, instruction, and literacy improvement.

Finally, district leaders can give

principals opportunities to share and learn about strategies and approaches that support quality teaching. By providing this time, district leaders foster intentional collaboration among leaders as they work toward integrating the Literacy Classroom Visit Model into ongoing, consistent practices across the district.

PRINCIPAL LEARNING

The best way to grow a district's capacity to improve teaching and learning is to ensure that every school becomes a model of effective professional learning through collaboration and collegiality. To increase their effectiveness in raising student achievement, principals also need opportunities to participate in learning opportunities with their peers (Mizell, 2009).

Districts can build leaders' capacity to work together effectively by developing a cadre of principals and other leaders who work with learning teams within their schools. For principals to understand, value, and lead these learning teams, they need to experience working within facilitated study teams themselves.

A strategy to provide professional learning for a large group of principals using economies of scale is to offer it through the state principals organization. To make the greatest impact, state organizations should ensure the professional learning is focused, job-embedded, and sustained. Offering leadership teams professional learning for the Literacy Classroom Visit Model through the state principals organization provides consistency and creates a statewide support network for leaders as they develop processes for instructional growth and change.

In Minnesota, groups of principals meet for the first two days of a four-day professional learning experience during the summer to learn about and be able

to identify quality literacy instruction in classrooms. After building foundational knowledge, they go back to their schools to gather data that indicate the status of literacy teaching and student learning. Principals observe all classrooms at least two times during a four- to six-week period gathering data before returning for their third day of professional learning.

On day three, leaders work together to analyze their school data patterns, discussing and learning from each other's data while thinking collaboratively about possible next steps. They also learn how to include reflective practices in the professional learning culture within the school. At the end of the day, principals are equipped with different, enhanced instruments. They return to their schools to visit classrooms and collect data with a tighter focus.

A month later, during day four, leaders learn to use the data to develop action steps to address the common patterns that emerge from the literacy data. They discuss how to share their data analysis and recommendations for resources and professional learning with teachers by using critical, nonevaluative language seated in data.

Prepared with extended knowledge of what effective literacy instruction looks like and how to monitor if professional development is implemented with fidelity, these principals are ready to lead their literacy improvement efforts with confidence.

Katy Schuerman, a principal in Wanamingo, Minnesota, says that, since engaging in professional learning about the literacy classroom visit, "I have a clear vision of what instructional practices can make a difference."

Jim Schimelpfenig, a principal in Howard Lake, Minnesota, says that literacy classroom visits "will impact not only literacy instruction but all instruction in my school."

MOUNDS VIEW PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Several school districts sent all of their principals and associate principals or district leaders to the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association Literacy Academy to learn to use the Literacy Classroom Visit Model throughout their schools.

Professional learning for principals in the Mounds View Public Schools began with the principals participating in four days of learning about the Literacy Classroom Visit Model, where they examined important areas specific to the culture and context they lead.

When principals returned to their schools to gather two rounds of data, the 10 Mounds View principals wanted to conduct one round of data in a school together. Conducting literacy classroom visits with literacy leaders is, in itself, useful professional learning for principals.

Their discussions about the attributes identified on the literacy classroom visit instrument help them identify what is being taught, and the process of identifying and communicating areas of strength and need deepens their content knowledge and enhances their ability to hold meaningful and focused conversations with teachers about their instruction and student learning.

Building a community of leaders is vital to improving instructional leadership. As leaders work together to learn and discuss developing practices, they create relationships that have a positive effect on those whom they lead (Spillane, 2006). As teachers see their leaders working and growing together, they respond to the model of collaboration.

Allison Storti, a principal in Mounds View, Minnesota, says, "There is so much power in being aligned across the whole district. It's important for the staff and community to see that we are all having common



Photo by SANDI NOVAK

School leaders discuss data collected using the Literacy Classroom Visit instrument in their schools at a Minnesota Elementary Principals Association Literacy Leadership Academy. From left: Nancy Wittman-Beltz, principal, Jonathan Elementary School; Jon Kison, dean of students, Chanhassen Elementary School; Charles Zemek, dean of students, Clover Ridge Elementary School; and Greg Lange, principal, Chanhassen Elementary School, all from Eastern Carver County Schools in Minnesota.

conversations using the Literacy Classroom Visit Model."

Storti's colleague, Todd Durand, who is also a principal in Mounds View, added, "We have more kids reading than ever before. They love to read. Since we have dedicated our professional learning to literacy, we have more books checked out from the school library, the guided reading library, and classroom libraries. Students know what they are supposed to learn and do, using their own work as evidence of accomplishment. This revitalization and focus on literacy-based professional learning has changed our instructional practice."

A DISTRICTWIDE CULTURE OF LITERACY

Districts play important roles in promoting and sustaining the successful use of the Literacy Classroom Visit Model. When district leaders assume responsibility for building capacity through their school leaders, they develop a collaborative culture that supports application of the model and builds a flourishing literacy environment.

If the model is part of a multischool

initiative, district leaders can help ensure that all school leaders conduct useful and powerful literacy classroom visits by providing professional learning for principals and teacher leaders from each school, conducting literacy classroom visits in small groups and analyzing the data together, offering coaching, and providing additional access to outside experts when needed.

Leaders in New Prague Area Schools in Minnesota value professional learning for their teachers and realized that the district was ready for an intentional plan for consistent instruction to enhance literacy achievement for all students. We worked with the district to provide guidance in using the Literacy Classroom Visit Model to identify specific areas of strength and need. Our first step was to work with the director of curriculum and instruction to determine the district's needs before working with the leadership team.

The process for principals and district leaders began with a full day dedicated to learning about current research-based practices in literacy and how to use the model. Next, principals led a staff meeting in their schools to

explain the process and how data would be collected and used. A teacher survey gauged their knowledge of current literacy practices.

As a team, leaders conducted literacy classroom visits in each school to determine baseline patterns of strength and need. Within a few weeks, they collected a second series of data, then reflected on and discussed what they gathered.

The emerging patterns from the literacy classroom visits and teacher surveys affirmed that literacy was highly valued across the district and teachers supported students' literacy development by offering classroom libraries and a variety of literacy learning opportunities across grade levels.

Teachers posted learning targets and provided time for students to read independently. Data also revealed that, while the district demonstrated a literacy culture and elements of solid instruction, it lacked consistency in every classroom and across the district. Conversation among the leaders focused on how to move from good instruction to great.

Patterns indicated several important areas in need of growth: organizing classroom libraries to support student self-selection of texts for independent reading and application; establishing a practice of conferring with students about their reading on a regular basis; writing, teaching, and assessing learning targets; and using effective small-group instruction to support the shift in ownership from teacher to student.

While many classrooms posted learning targets, the targets did not provide clear performance criteria so that students could know what they were expected to learn, do, and show to move toward proficiency. And, although teachers taught and modeled learning goals in whole-group lessons, this support didn't extend to small-group

guided practice and independent reading and application. Teachers dedicated some time to independent reading, but students needed support in self-selecting texts across their reading range to apply their learning while reading.

Equipped with the teacher survey and classroom visits data, leaders developed a three-year plan for resource allocation and professional learning that included periodic classroom visits to ensure learning is applied and integrated into classroom instruction. These visits also help assess the impact of instructional changes on student growth and achievement.

Maren Bahler, director of curriculum and instruction in New Prague, Minnesota, said, "As we implement the Literacy Classroom Visit Model systematically in all elementary buildings, our district leaders are more aware of what to look for, in a particularly efficient way, to ensure best practice of literacy instruction."

A CATALYST FOR LASTING CHANGE

Strong leaders recognize the value of effective teachers and the instructional environments they create. Accordingly, they understand how important it is to identify and provide the resources and professional learning experiences that teachers need to increase student achievement (DuFour & Mattos, 2013).

The Literacy Classroom Visit Model supports leaders in this task by helping them collect and analyze information about current classroom practices and provides teachers with the support they need to grow. Used well, the model is a catalyst for lasting change. By incorporating purposeful literacy classroom visits into their improvement efforts, principals can create and sustain a powerful culture of literacy throughout the school community.

Tom Cawcutt, a principal in

Barnum, Minnesota, describes the impact of the Literacy Classroom Visit Model: "Using the Literacy Classroom Visit Model to guide our professional learning has changed the way we teach and students learn. Our teachers have transformed literacy instruction by providing lessons aligned to standards with a specific focus on learning targets, using data to improve instruction, and meeting student needs in a targeted manner.

"Our students are stronger readers as a result of common, schoolwide reading practices, and instruction that meets their individual needs. Given the gradual release model of instruction, students now take further ownership of their reading, which has empowered them as learners. Our assessment data have shown an increase of over 20% over the past four years. The Literacy Classroom Visit Model works."

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Photo by ANDREW MILLER

From left, teachers Lillian Wu, Stephen Venema, Kathy Lynch, Ivy Wang, Mary Burns, Phil Kittower, and Misti McDaniel of the Shanghai American School in China participate in a protocol exploring a problem of practice.

PROCESS FOR DISCOVERY

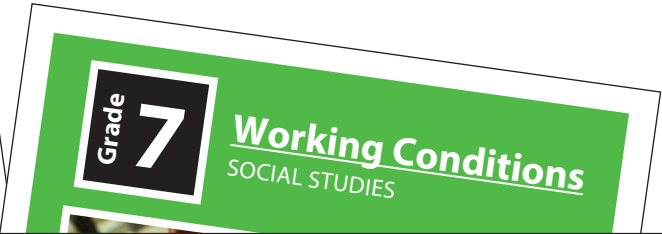
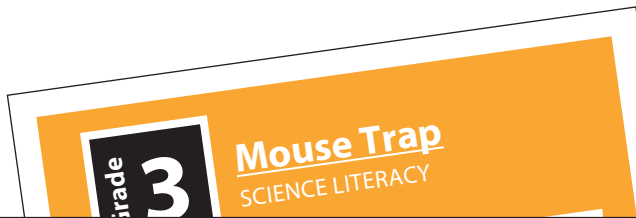
PROJECT-BASED LEARNING BUILDS
TEACHERS' COLLABORATION SKILLS

BY ANDREW MILLER


Project-based learning is a successful way to engage students in learning in the classroom. Research reports increases in student

achievement data on tests such as Advanced Placement (Edutopia, 2013) as well as increased critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Beckett & Miller, 2006).

Students are more engaged in learning as they grasp with problems, challenges, and questions to investigate in an authentic context (Thomas, 2000). In addition, teachers report



Grade 8 **Beanz Meanz Mathz**
MATH



Driving question: What's the variance in heights of your data of beans?

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:
In order to learn about standard deviation, students were given a variety of beans of different lengths. Sample data sets included the same type of beans of different lengths, as well as a mixture of beans of different lengths. Students measured the lengths of green beans and determined the mean, median, and mode, and then discovered the standard deviation and variance. Students worked in teams to accomplish this task, but then showed what they knew independently.



STUDENT PRODUCTS

- Participate in a table team measuring activity and determine the standard deviation of varying lengths of beans.
- Complete assessment independently to show understanding.

TEACHER REFLECTIONS

“It was very visual to see how standard deviation works. Without us telling them about what standard deviation is, the students were able to develop their own understanding. They moved the concrete to pictorial to the abstract, an essential part of mathematical thinking.”
— *Hank Claassen and Misti McDaniel*

STUDENT REFLECTIONS

“The most enjoyable part of this activity was being able to measure tangible items instead of having a premade data set, allowing us to understand the full process of calculating the standard deviation. The most important thing I learned was to go over all of the collected data with my team afterward to prevent mistakes in the calculations. The most difficult part of the bean activity would be making sure that everyone had the same data and came to a consensus with each calculation before moving on.” — *Elle*

“My favorite part of the activity was learning hands-on by doing an actual experiment to learn how standard deviation works. I liked learning this way because I had more fun doing the work, therefore I remembered it better. The most important thing I learned was that 67% of the data falls within the first standard deviation.” — *Ella*

SHANGHAI AMERICAN SCHOOL

Example of a discovery card from Shanghai American School. To learn more about the project at Shanghai American School and see the discovery cards, visit: <http://cards.buildingculturebybuildingpractice.com/story-discovery-cards>.

increased satisfaction in their practice when they use project-based learning (Hixson, Ravitz, & Whisman, 2012).

This last finding is striking when we consider the potentials for applying project-based learning to professional development. If both students and teachers are more engaged when they use project-based learning, why aren't we using the elements of project-based learning to engage teachers in

professional development?

Project-based learning provides a framework for transforming professional learning with innovative instruction and can be a model for designing job-embedded professional development for all teachers.

WHAT IS PROJECT-BASED LEARNING?

When many of us think of the word

“projects,” we might conjure up images of creating a volcano for a science fair or dressing up for a '70s fair in social studies class. These are what many of us working in project-based learning refer to as “dessert” projects.

Traditionally, projects are often used as a culminating experience after the majority of teaching and learning has occurred. We might teach important content and skills on

How to design project-based learning

Instructional leaders have a number of factors to consider in designing project-based learning professional learning. The project needs to have goals and outcomes connected to the school and/or district, appropriate voice and choice, and should be an ongoing investigation over time.

The project should be manageable and have specific priorities to develop and assess. The learning for the project should also be tangible and meaningful so that it can be assessed, including a public component or demonstration of learning. It is also important to include times for collaboration and times for independent learning.

Use the following questions to facilitate your own design.

These questions can provide a framework for planning and implementing project-based learning professional development. As we continue to improve our professional learning practices, we need to use learning methods that work for our students. Project-based learning can be a powerful tool to increase teacher learning and engagement in reflecting on and improving professional practice.

1. **What are the goals and outcomes for the project?** Teachers should be engaged in learning about professional practice. These could be goals related to specific instructional strategies, student achievement data, or even collaborative and school culture goals.
2. **How will the project be meaningful, authentic, and challenging?** The professional learning project should be connected to the classroom, and teachers need to see it as directly applicable to their daily work. The project should also be a challenge and push teachers outside of their comfort zone in appropriate ways.
3. **How will teachers have voice and choice?** While there may be specific goals for all teachers in the professional learning project, teachers need voice and choice throughout. This might take the form of teams investigating similar problems of practice, choice in what products they will produce or share, or even when they choose to do specific components of the project.
4. **How will teachers be assessed?** The project should include specific products or deliverables, including authentic work units, discovery cards, or presentations. There should be formative assessments that might include feedback sessions, protocols, or even ongoing reflection journals.
5. **How will teachers share their work and learning?** A public component is critical to any project. It helps build accountability and culture. Teachers should share their work with each other and perhaps with an even larger audience.
6. **How will the project be inquiry-based and sustained over time?** Instead of just a one-time work, the project must be a sustained inquiry process. There must be an effective launch and driving question for the project to focus the work. The launch could be a video, a provocative article, or an engaging workshop to start the process. In addition, there needs to be a focus on deeper learning through questioning.
7. **What variety of strategies and structures will be embedded in the project?** Project-based learning leverages a variety of instructional strategies. An effective professional learning project should include protocols, workshops, classrooms visits, and other effective adult learning strategies.

argumentative writing and then have students choose a project to show what they know. Engaging, yes; but not quite true project-based learning.

Instead of waiting for the project, project-based learning makes the project the main course of learning, not simply the dessert at the end (Larmer & Mergendoller, 2010a). As the project is engaging and meaningful, learners learn and apply in a cycle of inquiry. Learners are given voice and choice in what they

might learn and how they will show that learning and share it with a public audience (Larmer & Mergendoller, 2010b).

Direct instruction might occur, but it comes from the meaningful inquiry of the project. The project is also centered around a meaningful driving question, such as, “Is our water safe to drink?” or “How can we reduce poverty in our community?”

At Shanghai American School

in Shanghai, China, we have taken these components of effective project-based learning and applied them to professional development.

SHANGHAI AMERICAN SCHOOL

Shanghai American School is China’s largest international school with students from over 40 countries in grades pre-K to 12. Teachers come from more than 27 countries, having experience both teaching in the United

States as well as numerous other international schools across the globe.

One of the challenges at Shanghai American School is what we call a “suitcase” curriculum. By this, we mean that teachers are doing engaging projects and units with their students, but it isn’t often visible to all stakeholders.

While the school has adopted standards to focus on rigor and consistency, the implementation of these standards is made difficult by the continuous coming and going of international teachers. We celebrate this, as international teaching provides the opportunity to travel and learn in many countries, yet we also know this makes it a challenge for a consistent experience of teaching and learning.

While teachers at the school innovate in the classroom, we have been doing so through what already existed. All too often, orientation for incoming teachers has been hit or miss in defining what is taught and assessed. We knew we needed some baseline of curriculum to continue to innovate. Thus, the school has focused on having a guaranteed and viable curriculum that focuses on student learning.

In addition to this challenge, instructional coaching is fairly new at the campus. We needed to build a culture for coaching while working on the larger school goals of curriculum and instruction. As teachers focused on project-based learning in classrooms, we created professional development for teachers that would last a few months and mirror the project-based learning experience.

As coaches, our goals were to:

- Identify teachers’ learning goals;
- Support teachers in building their collaborative skills and learn from each other about the experiences in which they engage their students every day;
- Make the hidden visible by

capturing and curating powerful learning experiences, including projects, units, and performance tasks;

- Start the process of moving toward a guaranteed and viable curriculum by celebrating what was working in the classroom;
- Support teachers in building their reflective lens to improve their daily work with students; and
- Focus on both people and product.

To that end, we created a project with this driving question: “What is the story of learning at Shanghai American Puxi Middle?” Our products were discovery cards that included photos of student learning in action, teacher reflections, a task or project description, and student reflections (Miller, 2017).

As coaches, we were chief curators of the work, but we also partnered with teachers to help them identify what they wanted to curate. We launched our project during a Wednesday staff meeting. We showed teachers a video that explained our project and our goals. We also shared a timeline of what would be occurring. We elicited their likes and wonders to start the inquiry process and engaged them in brainstorming possible classroom experiences to curate.

Next, we met with teacher teams to discuss their initial ideas. To support our learning as instructional coaches, two coaches attended these meetings. One served as a meta-coach to give feedback after the meeting, while the other focused on facilitating the conversation.

We used the Seven Norms of Collaboration to build our collaborative skills, and they served as a tool for reflection throughout every interaction (Garmston & Wellman, 2016). These include “pausing, paraphrasing, presuming positive intent, and putting

ideas on the table.”

After teachers identified what they wanted to curate and reflect on, we set up specific times to visit classrooms to start the process of curation. The coaches interviewed students, held short conversations with teachers in action, and took photos of the learning occurring in the classroom.

Afterward, coaches created the discovery cards from the data collected and scheduled follow-up conversations to reflect further about the work. Teachers openly reflected about what worked and what they wanted to work on to improve their practice. Indeed, the discovery cards served as catalysts for conversations around teaching and learning.

After collecting many discovery cards and holding many conversations, we also held a staff meeting where teachers brought a problem of practice to get feedback from other teachers. Finally, we assembled and shared an anthology of the cards to display our learning.

FOSTERING AN EFFECTIVE LEARNING COMMUNITY

At its heart, this professional development project focused on fostering an effective learning community of educators, a critical component for effective professional learning (Learning Forward, 2011).

Not only did we have specific goals for building collaborative and reflective skills, but the project was aligned to the larger school goal of guaranteed and viable curriculum. Teachers engaged in collective responsibility to start the process of curating curriculum and reflecting on it to improve student learning. Teachers were held accountable to this project through the use of discovery cards, an anthology of student work, goals from administration, and, most importantly, from each other. Collaborative conversations were meaningful and celebratory rather than

taking a deficit approach.

The professional learning project itself was a collection of effective adult learning strategies and learning designs. Teachers engaged in project-based learning. We used protocols for professional practice to allow for equitable and structured conversations connected to student learning. Teachers developed their own goals and selected their own problems of practice to address.

Reflection was ongoing and critical to the project's success, and tools and norms increased teachers' reflective lens. The learning occurred in whole-group staff meetings, smaller team meetings, and through informal visits and conversations. Teachers were engaged from the voice and choice they had in their curation and through the fact that the work was directly related to classroom practice and student learning.

Finally, the professional learning was effective and sustainable because we used existing resources. Instructional coaches took the lead in designing and implementing the professional learning project. The project itself was job-embedded and not a one-time visit from a coach, but an extended inquiry in teaching and learning with multiple touch points and assessments.

Professional learning included whole-staff meetings as well as designated days on the school calendar. Overall, the project-based learning professional learning experience drew on best practices for adult learning and effective professional learning for all teachers.

OVERALL IMPACT

Our overall goals were to build a collaborative culture and start a dialogue around a guaranteed and viable curriculum through discovering what is occurring in the classroom. We wanted colleagues to learn more about each other, and we wanted to

Reflection was ongoing and critical to the project's success.

build clarity for learning outcomes and activities in our schools. The discovery cards themselves were a clear and transparent deliverable of student learning, but there were other powerful outcomes as well.

We collected comments from our celebration and sharing of our learning anthology and discovery cards. One of the comments addressed the power of learning what teachers are doing with students in their classrooms. "I'm already seeing curricular connections to other colleagues I hadn't seen before," one teacher said. "I'm looking forward to integrating my curriculum."

Another teacher said, "It was great to have a summarized snapshot of the learning experiences that students are having, and it will help us to upgrade our curriculum next year." Teachers gained better clarity of what students were learning in their classrooms as well as other classrooms. This data also helped teachers set goals for the next year, when they will continue to engage in the process of aligning curriculum and assessments to standards to improve student learning outcomes.

In addition to curricular outcomes, we noticed our teams are more willing to collaborate. Teachers regularly meet and protect that collaborative time to focus on student learning. Teachers want to learn from each other and, in the future, will engage in learning walks to continue to support this learning and collaboration.

In addition, coaches saw more teachers coming to the office to ask for support. Some teachers who never visited before came for the first time the whole year after completion of the project to have discussions and dialogues. Not only were there more direct curricular outcomes, but there

were cultural outcomes that positively impacted student learning.

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REPLAY, REFLECT, REFINE

VIDEO-BASED COACHING ACCELERATES TEACHER GROWTH

BY DAVID BAKER, CATHERINE CARTER, PATRICIA HAGAN,
TEMPLE HAYLES, RYCHIE RHODES, AND KAREN SMITH

The cognitive load that a teacher experiences is mind-numbing. To improve, a teacher must begin by reflecting on his or her work, but with the mountain of decisions, where does a teacher find time or have the capacity to notice the way in which students are interacting with lessons?

Kauchak & Eggen (2005)

discovered that a teacher makes 800 to 1,500 educational decisions every day (p. 55). How is it possible for a teacher to remember mental notes and decide which decisions are having the biggest impact on student achievement, and which ones are impeding student learning? How does a teacher attend to student needs? How does an individual shift instruction based on these needs, and how can data be collected to

analyze and evaluate for effectiveness?

Jim Knight discusses “the busyness of teaching” — and, he adds, “all while keeping an eye on the clock” (Knight, 2014, p. 6). The answer in the St. Vrain Valley School District, 30 miles northwest of Denver, Colorado, and educational home to more than 32,000 students, is the use of video. We have learned that video helps teachers reflect on the impact of their decisions by



Photos by KERRI MCDERMID

Above left: Karen Smith, left, a St. Vrain Valley School District teaching and learning coach, and Kayce Johnson, a first-year teacher at Timberline PK-8 in Longmont, Colorado, review video of Johnson's class together. Above: Johnson, left, counts and identifies behaviors from the video while Smith records the data.

freeing them of the burden of teaching and reflecting simultaneously.

In 2014, the St. Vrain Valley School District Office of Professional Development began using video for professional learning. We purchased licenses for a video platform that allows teachers, coaches, and administrators to upload video and pause at specific points to add comments, questions, and notes. Here's what we have learned about how to use video effectively and efficiently to accelerate the growth of the teachers in our district.

VIDEO AS ACCELERATOR: Teachers seeing their practice through their own eyes

The traditional coaching cycle begins with the teacher and coach meeting to plan an observation. Teacher and coach identify goals and what to look for during the lesson: What are students saying? What are students doing in response to a question? How well are they transitioning?

During the observation, the coach collects data based on the goal. Shortly

after the observation, teacher and coach reflect on what the data reveal about the impact of the teacher's decisions, and set new goals.

One challenge the traditional coaching cycle presents is that the data collection and reflection are driven by the coach's memory. A teacher has trouble remembering details of the lesson due to focusing on teaching rather than reflecting. At this point, the coach's job is to help the teacher recall these details in a way that helps her process, reflect, and set goals to improve.

This presents two problems: First, the details are perception-based, meaning that a coach may not remember events as they actually happened; second, the data that were collected are the only data that can be collected because that day's lesson can never be replayed.

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. Because the video can be replayed an infinite number of times, different data may be collected each time the teacher or coach views the video.

The teacher no longer has to retain lesson details in her memory, freeing her cognitive load. As such, the reflecting conversation has the potential to focus on many things rather than a single thing. This accelerates the coaching cycle.

Video offers an unedited opportunity to see classroom practices through the eyes of the teacher, capturing visual and auditory occurrences without a filter. Teachers notice things on the video that they may not have noticed in the moment.

Initially, the noticing is trivial, as new teachers don't possess the depth of knowledge to notice much else. For example, in the beginning of the year, Krista Thoren, a 6th-grade teacher, noticed that one of her students got up from his seat multiple times in a 10-minute period. Later in the year, the noticing becomes more complex.



Photo by KERRI MCDERMID

Patricia Hagan, foreground, a St. Vrain Valley School District teaching and learning coach, leads a community-building activity for first-year teachers during the Novice 1 Induction Academy at the Learning Services Center in Longmont, Colorado.

Kendra Hamblin, a 7th-grade teacher, said, “After watching our videos, we all noticed that we talk too much! We all thought we were giving students the opportunity to talk, but after watching the video, we realize that we talk a lot more than we thought we did.”

This progression in noticing is critical when helping new teachers navigate the teaching profession and is accelerated by continued video use and the concurrent noticing from the coach, who often notices more complex features of the lesson due to increased experience.

VIDEO AS OBSERVATION: The transformation starts

When introducing video, first we conquer potential negative connotations. Historically, teaching is an isolated and autonomous profession where the magic happens behind closed doors. In St. Vrain, we provide opportunities for a teacher to feel successful with her first experience with video by focusing on her students rather than on her. Once this barrier is broken down, the magic begins.

When a teacher has her own and her students' actions and words on video, she can begin the observation process without having to remember every moment of the lesson. Her practice comes to life and illuminates the hundreds of decisions that may or

may not have been remembered, and, more importantly, the impact that her decisions have on the ways in which students are interacting with the lesson.

Consider one elementary teacher who watched his lesson on video alongside his coach. In the debrief, the coach asked, “Why did you make the decision you did, and what outcome were you hoping for?” Initially, the teacher didn't remember making a decision in the moment, but after watching the video, was

able to step back to the moment and give the rationale behind the decision.

This powerful interaction would not have been possible without the use of video, accelerating thinking about the impact of the decision. Video and coaching helped deeper metacognition about the instance as well as similar decisions.

VIDEO AS INCREASED NOTICING: Subtlety and nuance emerge

Once teachers begin to feel safe with this process, they begin to notice more about the impact of their decisions on student engagement, learning, and understanding. The power of this stage in the process is the collaboration between coach and teacher as they engage in healthy, productive, and powerful discussion on what they are seeing in the video.

Consider the snippet of the conversation between Patricia Hagan (coach) and Sam Goering, a first-year teacher (see p. 43). In this example, it is clear that the video conversation is accelerating Goering's ability to notice and immediately act on his noticing. In addition, it is evident that Goering is becoming more able to be metacognitive on his own by asking questions that typically the coach would ask. In this way, Goering is creating the habit of reflecting, noticing, and

Viewing video together: A SAMPLE INTERACTION BETWEEN TEACHER AND COACH

TIME ON VIDEO: 00:42

Teacher: I am going over the purpose and offering a guiding question to think about during reading.

Coach: Yes! Students are more likely to comprehend and be accountable when they read with a purpose.

TIME ON VIDEO: 01:35

Teacher: Whenever I make a joke or say something provocative or exciting, students seems to chat more. Perhaps I should wait longer, have an attention signal, or do a turn and talk when these comments come up.

Coach: These are all effective ways to manage the chattiness and increase processing. Also, I know they are working in groups at times during this unit. When they are not working in groups, flipping to a different seating pattern that is more conducive to individual work will help decrease chattiness.

TIME ON VIDEO: 03:07

Coach: You are moving around the room. This proximity increases the likeliness that students will stay on task.

TIME ON VIDEO: 03:48

Coach: This might be a good time to have students do some individual processing or adding on to their note catchers.

Teacher: That was my intention — that they would add to it after the story and this conversation would help. I suppose I could have had them pull out their note catchers before we started reading and said to add to it.

TIME ON VIDEO: 06:22

Teacher: Each of these questions took the other classes about 30 to 60 seconds longer to figure out.

Coach: What are some scaffolding questions you might ask those kids to help them arrive at the answer?

Teacher: I did a little more prompting, like: "Think about a roller coaster and the plot diagram. Is this the most exciting part of her grandpa's story?"

TIME ON VIDEO: 06:28

Coach: Do you want the whole class to respond or individual students?

Teacher: I can't make up my mind over getting in the routine of hands up for responses or no hands. As long as everyone is paying attention and thinking about

the questions, I don't mind people calling out for quick responses.

Coach: What are some additional ways to help make their thinking visible so that you can increase the likelihood that all kids are processing the questions?

TIME ON VIDEO: 09:16

Teacher: Annotation linked to activity later. How do you annotate when some have e-book and some have textbook?

Coach: Why are some kids not on the Collections EBook? You could have them use sticky notes or take pictures and put into Notability to highlight?

Teacher: These are good ideas for annotating. Some students like the old-fashioned print books just like some like doing activities on paper. The print books are also handy if someone is fooling around on their iPad — I can take it away and hand them a book.

TIME ON VIDEO: 11:30

Coach: A student answers this question. Did you want someone to answer? This was a question that came up later on the Nearpod to check for understanding.

TIME ON VIDEO: 12:59

Teacher: Did I approach this subject correctly and give enough space?

Coach: You handled gently but with purpose. "Stranger danger is real."

TIME ON VIDEO: 13:51

Coach: Lots of kids saying "Shhhhh!"

Teacher: Is this good or bad?

Coach: Most likely an indication that they are getting annoyed by the noise in the room.

TIME ON VIDEO: 14:43

Coach: What did you want students to know and be able to do by the end of this lesson? How did this impact the questions you asked in the Nearpod?

TIME ON VIDEO: 15:24

Coach: Another great opportunity to ask kids a question: How would you describe the characters' personalities? Why?

Teacher: This would be an effective way to get at tone referenced earlier.

improving — a habit of master teachers that usually takes years to realize.

Using video helps accelerate this habit. According to Sherin and van Es (2005, p. 478), a goal of video is to “provide teachers with a kind of access to classroom interactions that is not possible during the act of teaching itself. Specifically, video offers a permanent record of classroom interactions. Thus, teachers do not have to rely on their memory of what occurred. ... [T]he goal is reflection rather than action. By allowing teachers to remove themselves from the demands of the classroom, viewing video may prompt teachers to develop new ways to examine what happens in their classrooms.”

Video has also propelled cohorts of St. Vrain teachers to accelerate their noticing, increasing their mindfulness and curiosity in their practice and accelerating their learning. Video supports this growth by allowing teachers to have multiple views of a lesson or series of lessons to analyze data, set purposeful goals, and see changes over time.

Having a cohort of teachers watching each other teach has encouraged conversations about expectations and student achievement. Teachers are watching their own and each other’s videos. Teachers rapidly move over the course of two months from thinking about “What am I doing?” to “What evidence of learning do I see in my students?”

A corresponding shift occurs in the timeliness of the data these teachers use to monitor instruction and make instructional change. Initially, teachers primarily used assessment grades. They transitioned to detailed formative student observation of skills and behaviors. They moved from watching themselves to watching students as a primary data point.

One of the strongest connections teachers are finding through video is the

idea of the pivotal teaching moment. This is the point in a teacher’s instruction where she can accelerate or deepen student thinking and propel student learning by her responses. By watching the video, teachers can see how they respond when students are confused.

VIDEO AS IMPROVEMENT IN PRACTICE

The habit of reflection that master teachers have, almost automatically and without thought, leads to improved practice. Research shows that novice teachers tend to notice trivial things (Blomberg, Renkl, Sherin, Borko, & Seidel, 2013). After experiencing coaching with video, a new teacher learns to take ownership of the impact of her decisions.

Eventually, the teacher is empowered to change the current state of his decisions to more closely match his desired state. Take Stephen Krupansky, a 6th-grade mathematics teacher, for example. In February, Krupansky’s students took nine minutes to come into the classroom and get settled. They were walking across chairs and yelling across the room to each other while Krupansky was moving desks and performing other tasks students could be doing.

After watching the video of his classroom, Krupansky reduced the time it took for students to enter the room and get started to only 30 seconds over the course of two to three weeks. His classroom became a model of rapid, engaged teaching.

Reflecting on the transformation in his classroom, Krupansky said, “Video coaching gave me a view into my teaching/classroom that would have never been possible before. It gave me the ability to see my students, and myself, in a whole new light, which made it possible to quickly adapt and learn from every interaction inside of my classroom.”

PROGRESS AND SUPPORT

In three years of using video, St. Vrain’s teachers have experienced progress and support during their first year of teaching. We have witnessed the transformation from new and veteran teachers as they begin to break down the virtual walls of their classrooms and invite others into their practice.

Rather than viewing video as a way to highlight all of the things that go wrong in a day, teachers in St. Vrain see the value of video as a tool for observing, data collecting, reflecting, refining, and improving their practice. The power of video has accelerated the learning curve for new and veteran teachers alike.

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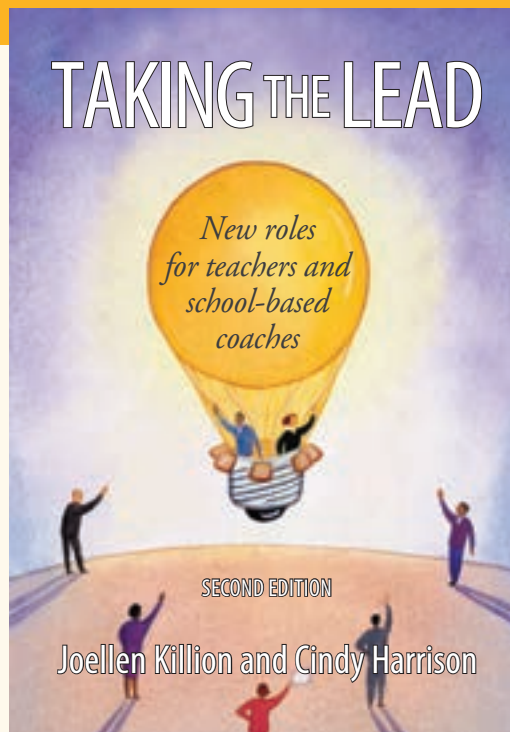
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WHAT TO DO ABOUT JIM?

PROFESSIONAL DIALOGUE TURNS
DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS
INTO GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

BY JOSEPH JONES AND T.J. VARI

Here is a common scenario: The kids love Jim and so do his peers. He's one of those teachers who lights up the room with his huge personality, and he's always good for a laugh. In fact, you can't help laughing along with Jim when he gets the room going.

Jim's best quality is that he possesses great soft skills and is a good communicator. He is agreeable, willing to serve on committees, and quite pleasant. There isn't a staff member in the school who wouldn't go to bat for Jim — not a custodian, cafeteria worker, or fellow teacher. Last year, when Jim's father died, the funeral parlor was packed with colleagues to support his loss, not because they knew Jim's dad but because everyone loves Jim.

Jim can ace the interview, too. There isn't a principal in her right mind who wouldn't hire Jim after an interview, and even though he could move to a neighboring district to make more


Hilarious

Strong
teacher-student
relationships

Weak
problem-
solving skills

Loyal





Mediocre teacher

Great staff member

Well-liked

Shallow content-area skills

money, he's committed to the students, teachers, and the principal of his school, Sharon.

The truth is, though, Jim lacks some of the specific skills needed in the classroom to support student learning. He'll certainly be nominated as the teacher of year as he has year after year at his school, but mostly by peers who haven't seen him teach or haven't really dug into his student learning outcomes.

As principal, Sharon knows he can grow and develop as a teacher, but she is hesitant to have a direct conversation with him, even though it could improve his performance. Why? Although Jim is mediocre in the classroom, he is a great staff member and well-liked by all, and Sharon's afraid of the ripple effect it might cause in staff morale.

A tough conversation that mentions the need to improve or even the threat of potentially putting Jim on a performance plan could crush his morale. Furthermore, if Jim decided to share what was happening with other teachers, the result of his being put on a plan, coupled with Jim's popularity, could have a negative impact on the school community as a whole.

This leaves Sharon at a crossroads. As Sharon listens to Jim's professional learning community (PLC) at work, she is perplexed on how to move forward, yet she's confident on what needs to be addressed.

The problem is Jim's hard skills. His technical prowess and depth of

knowledge within his content area are limited. When it comes time for problem solving and analysis of complex issues, Jim falls short. However, the job requires both kinds of skills — the soft and the hard skills are equally important.

Jim's PLC is focused on using evidenced-based strategies to close the 9th-grade achievement gap in math, and Jim's classes are performing the lowest within the department. Sharon is convinced that Jim's moderate outcomes are due to his strong teacher-student relationship and not his pedagogical skills, which she cares so much to improve, but shudders to think about what she might say and how she might say it.

Even though the evidence to intervene with Jim is there, Sharon remains hesitant. She's left to balance the culture of the organization with Jim's (and others') need for improvement. Despite the possible drawbacks, Sharon decides to take the first step with Jim — having a conversation and laying out the strengths and weaknesses of Jim's performance and how she believes they can work together to improve his ability.

Sharon believes in transparency and has pushed professional dialogue among her teachers. Now she decides to exercise her own practices with her staff. She likes Jim and knows that if he accepts her feedback, he can improve.

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

The reality is that professional dialogue centered on improving someone's performance is challenging. Educators too often avoid difficult conversations 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.

The idea of conversations around performance reviews, and even more challenging improvement plans, is daunting. Even though the goal is to improve the employee's performance, difficult conversations don't automatically stimulate an environment and culture of continual growth.

Establishing and systematizing professional dialogue in the workplace transforms the difficulty and complexity of such conversations and creates manageable, meaningful, and growth-oriented opportunities. Through ensuring clarity of goals within the organization, candid two-way feedback, and cycles of reflection, professional dialogue is a dynamic aspect of the culture and is appreciated and expected when it's part of the fabric of the organization.

When it's not integrated into the basic structures of management, it can be hard to introduce. But there are three important aspects of professional dialogue that school leaders can employ for implementing and sustaining a successful model.

CLARIFY GOALS

There are three predominant strategies that Sharon can use to approach her difficult conversation with Jim. The first centers on depersonalizing the situation for both Jim and Sharon and ensuring there is clarity around the mission, goals, and values of the school.

Clarifying the purpose of the work is vital to effective professional dialogue. The purpose of the work — mission,

goals, and values — should be integrated into every conversation regarding performance. Professional conversations about the organization's mission, goals, and values provide clarity without making the feedback personal.

Jim's classes are underperforming. The school has specific targets that Jim's students are not on track to meet. As a result, a conversation is not only warranted, it should be expected. The key is to focus on the students' performance and not Jim's, at least at first. Ultimately, this may translate into changes Jim needs to make with his instruction, but the first step within the professional conversation should rest on Jim's students.

This doesn't suggest that Jim will automatically be willing to change or be open to ideas on how to move his students forward. In fact, Sharon should expect resistance; however, even amid the resistance, the challenge and the fact remain the same — that Jim's students need to improve and Jim is in the best position to help them.

Maintaining the students' performance as the central argument allows Sharon to open the conversation with a focus on them and their needs. The conversation becomes about how Jim can help them and what is necessary, not on what Jim is not doing or doing wrong.

Take caution, though. With this approach, it is critical not to be too impersonal, which can happen when the conversation shifts too far into a discussion regarding goals and values and the organization's responsibility. The conversation about expectations and personal accountability for growth and improvement should center on goals and values to include personal ownership.

The goals and values are simply the backdrop for the feedback concerning an individual's personal actions. The backdrop, or model, makes the conversation about

performance more objective, pointing out deficiencies based on predefined organizational norms. Professional conversations, especially when it comes to improvement strategies for individual performance, have to be based on a clear purpose or there's a risk in offending hardworking people. Working hard and being effective at reaching goals are two different things, and that needs to be made clear through professional dialogue.

REFLECTION #1:

Are your organization's goals clear enough to use in a conversation regarding performance?

CANDID FEEDBACK

The second strategy Sharon can use is candid, two-way, and ongoing communication. Professional dialogue that is infrequent, unstructured, or random is ineffective. James Baron, William S. Beinecke Professor of Management at Yale School of Management, says "You're giving a tremendous amount of real-time feedback, and your employees are people you know well. Hopefully your relationship can survive candid feedback" (Knight, 2011).

Sharon, as the principal and instructional leader, needs to be able to guide Jim. Having specific feedback on how and what Jim can do to help his students succeed is critical. Specific feedback is candid by nature because flowery feedback that doesn't cut to the chase can be misleading and ambiguous. That won't help to manage change, which is the reason to give the feedback in the first place.

Additionally, good professional dialogue is two-way. The word dialogue means exchange. The exchange needs to be established in a system that is continuous and systematic. Jim should have the opportunity to provide feedback not only on Sharon's



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recommendations, but the situation as a whole. Again, Sharon needs to be mindful of defensive responses or hesitation, which are common.

However, back-and-forth dialogue is important for creating an atmosphere where 360-degree feedback is valued by all. In addition, if there is true two-way conversation, this not only helps with the relationship, it also creates greater levels of accountability for both Sharon and Jim. Finally, Sharon's first encounter with the conversation about student performance has to be only one of several ongoing exchanges regarding the improvements that must happen over time.

REFLECTION #2:

Is your feedback specific, candid, two-way, and ongoing?

REFLECT AND REVIEW (THE TWO R'S)

The third strategy Sharon can employ is to use the two R's: reflect and review. Reflection and review are what make the professional dialogue process worthwhile for both parties. Ensuring that the goals of the organization are clear and providing candid feedback are powerful, but are incomplete without the two R's.

This process is critical for Jim and Sharon, both together and as individuals. Together, Jim and Sharon can focus on the particular areas and reflect on what is working and so on. Jim's own personal reflection on his skills will help him understand the growth that he needs to achieve and how that growth is tied to his students' successes.

Sharon is growing as a leader, too, and reflecting on the conversations with her teacher deepens her understanding of herself, her employees, and the most appropriate methods to discuss change. The two R's are powerful and too often overlooked. Forward momentum is



always the goal, growing and improving performance over time, which requires a longitudinal approach.

Reviewing feedback, past and present, helps ensure that the message is delivered with improved clarity each time. Noting what was clear and candid from a present scenario helps to identify what needs clarity next time. Quality feedback and a willingness to get better work together to build trust, which allows professional dialogue to drive success in the right environment.

If Sharon expects others to improve their practices over time, based on her feedback, she better have an expectation for herself that her feedback improves over time as well.

REFLECTION #3:

Have you given yourself time to reflect on your practices, including the feedback you give to others for them to improve?

CLEAR COMMUNICATION IS VITAL

Professional dialogue is daunting. However, clear communication is vital to overall success. Schools are constantly implementing new initiatives, many proven to be successful, but they lose effectiveness when not supported by clear professional dialogue and feedback cycles during implementation. Although challenging, an environment that communicates and reinforces overall expectations will have greater success.

All three professional dialogue elements are necessary, and failing to use all three will create substandard results. For example, even if Sharon worked with Jim and was very clear and direct with him regarding his need to grow (candor) but failed to be clear on how the deficiencies are adversely impacting the organization's goals (clarity), Sharon risks Jim not seeing the overall purpose and mission. Ensuring that Jim sees the big picture not only for himself, but also for the organization, is vital to her feedback having any impact.

Or, let's imagine that Sharon does the first two well (clarity and candor) — Jim is clear on the purpose, and Sharon's feedback has been very candid — but Sharon doesn't take time to reflect on the results. Subsequently, Jim's growth may potentially wane over time and, worse yet, Sharon may not know what aspects of the training plan actually paid off.

As Sharon works with Jim, using all three elements of professional dialogue, Jim's classroom practices are sure to improve, yielding the results necessary for his students to grow, which is every school's ultimate goal.

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IDEAS

BUILDING CAPACITY IN NEW LEADERS

New leaders don't know what they don't know. As leaders move from their preparation program focused on acquiring knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective leaders, they often feel as if their learning begins anew when they accept their first administrative position. The continued opportunity for professional learning on the job is essential.

A viable and structured mentoring and induction program lessens the need for new principals to feel as if they are self-taught with gaps in skills and a lack of understanding of key responsibilities. The impact of making decisions daily, needing to respect local traditions and values, and embracing opportunities for necessary change can present daunting challenges for any new school leader.

I am mentor, I am coach, p. **52**



Photos by MARY HAMMEL
Mike Mathes, left, and Mike Hull, both superintendent mentors in the Kansas Educational Leadership Institute, share coaching tips.



Dave Morrow, a principal mentor, meets Stephanie McNemar, a new principal, at the Kansas Educational Leadership Institute statewide orientation meeting.

I AM MENTOR, I AM COACH

EFFECTIVE
MENTORS HELP
NEW LEADERS
DEVELOP THEIR
OWN STRENGTHS

BY DONNA AUGUSTINE-SHAW AND MARCETA REILLY

Much has been written about the challenge of preparing good leaders within our schools. Smith and Smith (2015) note that effective leadership practices have a strong, measurable effect on student achievement, teaching quality, and schools.

Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) say that leadership is important because it sets conditions and expectations in the school for excellent instruction and a culture of ongoing learning for educators and students.

Fullan (2010) asserts that the impact of leadership can become the single most important factor in moving

schools forward.

That said, preparing good leaders depends not only on providing good initial professional learning, but also on creating a strong support structure during the early years of practice.

However, what good mentoring looks and sounds like varies widely in practice.

Many mentoring programs for

education leaders consist of buddy-like relationships that provide on-the-spot problem solving and random attempts at assistance or introducing the new leader in various settings.

These types of mentoring programs focus primarily on the nuts and bolts of the new role but lack robust components that have meaningful impact on long-term development. A buddy-type mentor, although well-intended, often does not encourage reflective practice, commit to ongoing support, or have the training necessary to coach new principals (Villani, 2006).

One mentee in this strong mentor/coach program recently said, “If the mentoring situation had been structured to ‘call me if you need anything,’ I wouldn’t have taken the time to stop and even think about what I needed, let alone take the time to initiate the conversation.”

Another mentee said, “I would have been in complete survival mode without the relationship I had with my mentor/coach.”

As leaders of a Kansas coaching program for mentors of new leaders, we believe there are more effective ways to provide support for new leaders. Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011) are an excellent resource to give direction for this more effective support.

For instance, the Leadership standard outlines the need for leaders to create a vision that values learning at

ABOUT THE KANSAS EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

The Kansas Educational Leadership Institute’s mission is to collaborate and share resources to support professional growth of educational leaders in the state’s schools. This support includes mentoring and induction of new leaders as well as professional learning for school and district leaders.

The institute has served 145 new superintendents and assistant superintendents since beginning in 2011, 120 new principals and assistant principals since 2013, and 12 new special education leaders since 2015.

The institute’s partnerships include the Kansas State Department of Education, United School Administrators of Kansas, Kansas Association of School Boards, Kansas School Superintendents Association, and the College of Education Department of Educational Leadership at Kansas State University. These partners establish programming direction and growth as well as meeting field-based needs.

Kansas practitioners, representing various professional organizations, provided initial recommendations on the mentoring and induction program structure. The institute’s design provides clear guidance on mentee requirements and mentor expectations because of these recommendations.

The program maintains a focus on continual improvement. Mentors serve as a critical friend, providing essential insight into field-based needs and recommendations on identified areas of growth. The institute administers end-of-year surveys annually to all program mentees and mentors. These data reveal positive trends:

- During the first five years of operation, 100% of district program mentors and mentees agreed the institute’s mentoring program helped mentees grow professionally. In addition, 100% of district-level mentors agreed that the institute’s professional learning helped them be a more effective mentor/coach.
- In a four-year trend, 90% of building-level mentors and mentees agreed that the institute’s mentoring/induction support is helpful to a first-year building leader, and 100% of building-level mentors agreed that serving as a mentor is a personal professional learning experience.

For more information about the Kansas Educational Leadership Institute mentoring program, contact Donna Augustine-Shaw at Donna5@ksu.edu.

all levels and develops capacity in others through distributed responsibility. Mentors can model continual learning and help new principals inquire about and be responsive to the learning needs of students and staff. This attention to *learning* helps new principals understand that, when staff make improvements, it not only increases their knowledge and skills, but also supports *system* growth.

Learning that is aligned to goals is key to implementation for lasting impact. In addition, *meaningful change*,

reinforced in the Implementation standard, requires time and sustained support to integrate new learning into current practice. Mentors can help new principals look for and recognize even small changes along the way. This keeps hope and positive energy for the change process flowing.

Finally, leadership development continues throughout one’s career and connects to the Learning Designs standard by creating conditions that establish face-to-face, individualized interaction along with reflective and

job-embedded collaboration (Learning Forward, 2011).

Educators moving into leadership roles, such as team leaders, instructional coaches, assistant principals, and principals, often feel most anxious about having all the answers for the people with whom they will be working. They assume their job is to be experts in what needs to be done and the best problem solvers in the room. And they fear that if they don't know enough, others will think they were not ready for the new position and they will lose the respect of their colleagues.

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. It's all about developing others, not about how good *I* am and how much *I* know.

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 grounded-ness. This is the solid basis for authority and respect.

In his book, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There: How Successful People Get Even More Successful*, Marshall Goldsmith (2007) explains that what gets you the new job (being smart, a good problem solver, natural leader) won't necessarily take you to the next level. Mentees need to learn new skills of building trust, rapport, and good communication. So a mentoring program that is responsive to and impacts the deeper needs of new leaders should have a new perspective.

Embedded in such a program is a focus on the growth of *mentors* as well as *mentees*. Mentors learn to develop a coach-like mindset to move beyond simply giving advice. Instead,

Mentors' most important work is to help new leaders explore and develop their individual leadership strengths.

their most important work is to help new leaders explore and develop their individual leadership strengths. In this type of program, mentors learn as much about good communication and giving good feedback as the mentees do about being the kind of leader they want to be. This results in a clear emphasis on the *being* for those in both roles — mentor *and* mentee.

DEVELOPING A COACHING MINDSET

This new way of being mentored changes the relationship between mentor and mentee. Mentors show up with a different mindset, ready to listen deeply and talk less. In this kind of relationship, mentees especially appreciate the listening ear and confidentiality of these conversations.

Mentors carefully listen to not only what is being said, but to what is *not* being said and lies just beneath the surface. Relying on their coaching training, mentors pose questions to enable new leaders to deepen their reflection and consider the impact of varied solutions. Their conversation creates a safe space for novice leaders to consider multiple options and decide for themselves about best action.

Through honest and nonthreatening dialogue, mentors show respect for the leadership style of mentees, which eases stress and helps move new administrators forward with increased confidence. In evaluation data collected where mentors shared perspectives on building capacity in new leaders, one mentor said, "Asking powerful

questions and listening are critical skills needed in today's environment." Another said, "The foundation is learning to be a committed listener. ... You have to listen to the response to the questions in order to provide the most appropriate feedback."

Training in coaching skills enables mentors to become more reflective in their own practice as well as develop skills to ask powerful *what* and *how* questions. This kind of dialogue allows new leaders to come to answers on their own. One mentor summed it up by saying, "My coaching mindset has changed significantly. My conversations are focused on the ability of the person I coach to find solutions. I am focused on listening and asking questions that are solution-focused and foster reflection."

In this kind of program, not only are mentors valued for their experience as successful practitioners, but they also have a willingness to be known as *coach-like* rather than as experts. They participate in professional learning on coaching skills to help them develop this coach-like mindset. Their work is focused on honing active listening skills, assuming positive intent, developing the innate strengths of the mentee, and providing reflective feedback (Cheliotis & Reilly, 2010).

Between professional learning sessions, mentors practice targeted coaching skills in practice labs. Participants get practice with feedback of their coaching in a low-risk environment. Its purpose is to bring to life real situations and application of the coaching mindset. Such guided professional learning enables mentors to hone the professional skills they can use in their daily practice with their own staff people as well as with their mentees.

In the Kansas Educational Leadership Institute program at Kansas State University, principal mentors attest to the benefit of participating in this type of coach-like mentor

professional learning. One mentor said, “I enjoyed all aspects and learned from all the opportunities. However, if I had to pick one, I would select the practice labs. The labs provided me a great opportunity for growth to be an effective mentor.”

After completing the professional learning for coaching, a new mentor said, “As a leader, we need to be able to look at each person’s situation and needs. We need to be prepared to listen and coach — every minute of every day. Improving as a listener might be the most important skill a leader can ever have and always improve on.”

Principal mentors often comment that professional learning for coaching helped them to slow down and remember the importance of reflection and empowering staff.

The emphasis on the mentor’s role as an active and committed listener, questioning for deep thinking, and having positive intent when working with mentees and others are valuable components of the professional learning. They provide lessons that are good for every leader to know and practice. In this way, the mentors become intentional about modeling the skills they want to help the mentees to develop.

BUILDING CAPACITY IN NEW LEADERS

New leaders don’t know what they don’t know. As leaders move from their preparation program focused on acquiring knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective leaders, they often feel as if their learning begins anew when they accept their first administrative position. The continued opportunity for professional learning on the job is essential.

A viable and structured mentoring and induction program lessens the need for new principals to feel as if they are self-taught with gaps in skills and a lack



Photo by MARY HAMMEL

Coach Marceta Reilly (standing) talks with new leaders about coaching at the Kansas Educational Leadership Institute statewide orientation meeting.

of understanding of key responsibilities. The impact of making decisions daily, needing to respect local traditions and values, and embracing opportunities for necessary change can present daunting challenges for any new school leader.

Skillfully trained and trusted mentors address these needs through specific coaching practices and confidential conversations focused on perspectives from outside the local district. Mentors provide a continuum of development and application aligned to leadership preparation standards. They support the development of new leaders by identifying and helping them focus on their strengths. This builds their capacity by enabling them to develop authentic professional presence and empowers their continued professional growth.

Mentors model being coach-like in many ways. They deepen the mentee’s understanding of the local context through performance observations held in the local school or district. Their goal-setting conversations focus on *mentee-directed* needs, drawing on the mentees’ strengths, and building understanding of the mentee for the school and district community.

One mentor in the Kansas program said that the most helpful part of the

mentoring program was “development of a professional/trusting relationship to support the needs of a new leader. Not only is the mentee looking for guidance, he/she truly appreciates the opportunity to communicate with an experienced colleague in a confidential manner.”

Another mentor noted, “Mentees know that their mentor is not there to judge or to evaluate them. The mentors are there to support and coach them in a safe environment. No topic is too trivial or too deep to talk about. I know I would have appreciated a mentor that had no stake in the decision other than to support me.”

Mentees, too, speak of the value of this coach-like relationship. “Getting to know my mentor and building a positive relationship that was built on collaboration and trust” was most helpful to one new principal.

Another new building leader said, “My mentor is a very good listener and is willing to spend the time to help me become a successful principal. He helped me think through different solutions to situations that I may not have come up with on my own without his coaching. I always felt safe to share information with him and his responses to my questions were honest and nonthreatening.”

A CULTURE FOCUSED ON “WE”

Bailey and Reilly (2017) speak of the importance of today’s leaders to create a school culture that moves from “me to we.” This teaming mindset promotes a continued focus on growing as a professional educator, developing competence and teaming with others to achieve individual growth, and increasing the level of learning within the school by raising the level of competence within the team to learn together.

Developing relationships and culture are critical to any new leader. One mentee said, “I was hired to establish a vision for the district. We had a vision on the wall that no one knew!”

Staff lacked consistent implementation of goals aligned with the vision. After extensive work, the new leader told staff, “We are ready to formalize the vision *we’ve* been working on.” He continued, “We are clear about the purpose and what we truly mean by collaboration, so it’s time *we* create a vision together about our shared beliefs.”

By taking time to have meaningful conversations with faculty and emphasizing meaning over task completion, this leader took the first steps in creating a culture of collaboration.

Another new leader envisioned continual learning and collaboration, but only a few people participated. To foster a culture of learning, this new leader said, “We all get better when we work together.” This became the mantra of the faculty as she emphasized the theme “Better Together” throughout the year.

It is these kinds of strong mentoring relationships, founded in trust, that give new administrators the courage to delve into delicate and purposeful conversations that embrace a spirit of teamwork dedicated to working toward

common goals.

School and district leaders provide an inspiring and visionary approach to motivate others and achieve desired results.

A commitment to improved teaching practices and student learning, insistence on equity and culturally responsive learning environments for every student, and meaningful communication with school and community stakeholders to engage in common work are all hallmarks of today’s leader.

Today’s leaders must understand the value of building a strong team to accomplish these collective goals. Strong mentoring support in the first years of practice continues a pattern of success and is necessary for every new leader. Mentors support this, equally engaged in professional learning, through acquiring a mindset that assists new leaders in becoming the best they can be in reaching a shared vision to accomplish agreed-upon goals.

One principal mentor summed up a strong and thoughtful approach to leadership and desire to impact staff and mentees. “As a principal, I want to show up as a leader and not a manager. This entails empowering others to be primary decision-makers where possible and using coaching techniques to help teachers and staff think through the decision-making process. It’s also about using a continuum of skills to be a flexible leader who reinvents herself and works one-to-one to give the very best to her employees and those who follow.”

Clearly, this kind of program changes the mentoring process that creates new learning for both mentee *and* mentor. It gives successful midcareer educational leaders opportunities to grow and contribute professionally, and it provides a dedicated focus on mentees’ needs as they forge their own path in their local school setting.

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Discuss. Collaborate. Facilitate.

TOOLS

A COHERENT SYSTEM CONNECTS LOOSE ENDS

Coherence ensures that teachers don't spend their time with professional learning that makes them wonder, "What does this have to do with me?" or "How is this going to help me work better with my students?" Coherence makes it possible for a teacher to connect new professional learning with other learning he or she experiences, as well as to align it with the highest priorities of a team, school, and system.

TOOLS
FOR
CREATING
COHERENCE

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TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

Becoming a Learning Team: A Guide to a Teacher-Led Cycle of Continuous Improvement
by Stephanie Hirsh and Tracy Crow

The learning team cycle as described in *Becoming a Learning Team* by Stephanie Hirsh and Tracy Crow was created to support teams of teachers working on particular lessons and instructional challenges within classrooms. Even as the day-to-day work of classroom teaching continues, educators are also responsible for addressing improvement goals at the school and system levels. What do educators need to do to ensure that professional learning and support is coherent across grade levels, subject areas, school buildings, and school systems?

WHAT IS COHERENCE?

In a coherent system, all initiatives that make a direct impact on teachers are aligned and reinforce one another's effectiveness; from the teachers'

perspectives, coherent initiatives are neither redundant nor contradictory. At the same time, to be coherent, all professional learning aligns with teacher, school, and system priorities. Such priorities are expressed in either the systemwide vision for teaching and learning or an instructional framework for a school, or preferably, both. When teachers work in a coherent system, they know their priorities and they know why those are priorities. Coherence ensures that teachers don't spend their time with professional learning that makes them wonder, "What does this have to do with me?" or "How is this going to help me work better with my students?" Coherence makes it possible for a teacher to connect new professional learning with other learning he or she experiences, as well as to align it with the highest priorities of a team, school, and system.

Coherence puts all educators on the same systemwide map, so to speak. Every teacher, every principal, knows where he or she is headed, who will travel with them, and who is driving the bus. They see options for getting where they are headed and they have the knowledge and skills to pick the most effective route. In outlining the importance of coherence, the Outcomes standard of Learning Forward's (2011) Standards for Professional Learning states:

Outcomes: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards. (p. 48)

The Outcomes standard encompasses three interrelated elements that professional learning must address to increase likelihood that it is linked



to educator and student learning: meet performance standards, address learning outcomes, and build coherence. Of the last element, the standard further explains:

Coherence requires that professional learning builds on what educators have already learned; focuses on learning outcomes and pedagogy aligned with national or local curriculum and assessments for educator and student learning; aligns with educator performance standards; and supports educators in developing sustained, ongoing professional communication with other educators who are engaged in similar changes in their practice. Any single professional learning activity is more likely to be effective in improving educator performance and student learning if it builds on earlier professional learning and is followed up with later, more advanced work to become a part of a coherent set of opportunities for ongoing professional learning. Coherence also ensures that professional learning is a part of a seamless process that begins in the preparation program and continues throughout an educator's career and aligns tightly with the expectations for effectiveness defined in performance standards and student

learning outcomes. (Learning Forward, 2011, p. 50)

While the Outcomes standard emphasizes coherence of learning for any given educator, other standards also stress the importance of alignment among learners and across grade levels, departments, and buildings. In the Learning Communities standard, for example, alignment is a central element:

Professional learning that occurs within learning communities provides an ongoing system of support for continuous improvement and implementation of school and systemwide initiatives. To avoid fragmentation among learning communities and to strengthen their contribution to school and system goals, public officials and school system leaders create policies that establish formal accountability for results along with the support needed to achieve results. To be effective, these policies and supports align with an explicit vision and goals for successful learning communities. Learning communities align their goals with those of the school and school system, engage in continuous professional learning, and hold all members collectively accountable for results. (Learning Forward, 2011, p. 26)

ABOUT THE BOOK

Becoming a Learning Team offers teachers step-by-step guidance in using collaborative learning time to solve specific student learning challenges.

Teacher teams can use the tools and strategies to:

- Understand the value and importance of collaborative learning to improve teaching and learning;
- Launch a learning team cycle with five key stages;
- Implement each of the five stages with specific strategies and supporting protocols;
- Adapt the cycle to fit specific school and district calendars and initiatives; and
- Engage external support in sustaining learning teams.

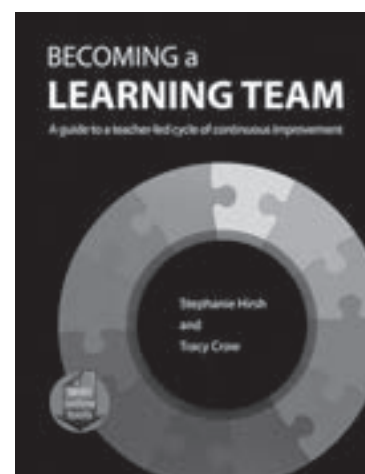
This book builds on the ideas explored in companion publications *Becoming a Learning System* and *Becoming a Learning School*. Each chapter includes additional tools and vignettes of actual school-based learning teams to help teachers facilitate or lead learning team cycles as part of their daily routines.

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DEFINING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO COHERENCE

Purpose	To build understanding of what systemwide coherence looks like and educators' roles in contributing to coherence.	
Recommended time	70 minutes	
Materials	A TALE OF TWO TEAMS, pp. 61-62 TABLE, p. 66	
Process	1. Share the reading A TALE OF 2 TEAMS as well as the following table and list of responsibilities of those in various roles. Ask individuals to read the short piece, and to highlight or underline the actions educators are taking that contribute to the outcomes teams experience in each of the two examples.	10 minutes
	2. Discuss the reading as a group. Volunteer instances of how particular educator actions contribute to coherence or a lack of coherence in these examples.	20 minutes
	3. Turn to the table of roles and responsibilities. Considering the local context, individually fill in the table with how your system or school operates now.	15 minutes
	4. Using the list of suggested actions for those in various roles, consider what actions or shifts in responsibilities might help to build coherence to fill in the next two columns of the table. Do this either as a group or in pairs. Include actions that aren't on the list of suggestions as they occur to the group.	25 minutes

A TALE OF 2 TEAMS

Without coherence, the impact of specific instances of team-based learning will be limited, no matter how successful they are on their own.

Meaningful and effective learning at one level must connect with meaningful and effective learning at another level. For example, let's say a team of three language arts teachers has set a team goal tied to improving students' vocabulary use, given the needs they identified through data analysis. After discussion and study, these teachers chose to learn about and implement a particular instructional strategy in several upcoming lessons. As they read through subsequent samples of student work, they found that their approach had been successful, and they talked about how to use their learning to go further during their next unit.

A team of teachers in any setting could experience such success through their collaborative learning. They identified an adult learning need connected to a student learning need, they found a way to address it that involved building their own capacity, and they saw an impact on student learning. Why does it matter if the system in which those teachers worked was a coherent system?

WELL, LET'S LOOK AT THAT TEAM IN A SYSTEM THAT LACKS COHERENCE

The three teachers identify a legitimate student learning need based on data. Because the district they work in doesn't have a common vision or share a deep understanding across all educators about what students need to know and be able to do, the need they identify isn't tied directly to particular instructional priorities. While the learning they do has value for them as individuals and a team, these educators only have so many hours in a day. When their other learning or perceived priorities don't line up with what they do as a team, they may lose the opportunity to focus on what they chose as a key priority. They may be spending time in districtwide learning that doesn't have anything to do with the challenge they face each day, and that takes up both time and energy. They may choose a next focus as a team and continue to experience success. However, if their school or system leaders don't value or recognize the advancements they are making with their students, they will lose motivation to continue, and they may also lose the structures that give them time to collaborate.

The leaders in that system won't necessarily be at fault; they may also be working hard on particular priorities and challenges. Their intention is to support the educators in their system with the best ways they know how. They see opportunities to try a range of initiatives or approaches that show promise for helping both students and teachers. With every new initiative they place into educators' days, they muddy teachers' understanding about what they are supposed to do and why they are doing it.

Since every educator in this system isn't headed in the same direction and speaking the same language, they end up working at cross purposes — all with great intentions and passionate energy. The harder they work, the more frustrated they get. And their students are equally lost, though some will certainly be experiencing excellent teaching and others will not.

Continued on p. 62

A TALE OF 2 TEAMS, *Continued from p. 61*

NOW, LET'S LOOK AT THAT SAME TEAM IN A COHERENT SYSTEM

When the team of three teachers identify its highest learning need, they look at data. As they do that, they know what the system's most pressing instructional needs are, and how those needs connect to a common vision for teaching and learning overall. That understanding drives how they identify their needs and their student needs.

Because all of the learning that this team experiences is connected to a shared vision and set of priorities, those educators see common threads that tie their learning hours together. All of the different learning events advance their knowledge, even though some of those hours are spent in a schoolwide study group, some are spent in team learning time, and others are spent online in a course that fills a knowledge-and-skills gap. Being able to connect their myriad learning opportunities means they go deeper with their learning.

The school and system leaders who support this team acknowledge the success it found with students because the entire system is working toward the same big goals. The team has opportunities to share its learning and success with other educators, and that expertise moves to other rooms and buildings. Meanwhile, other teams are having similar experiences, and they share their successes, and challenges as well. The knowledge and skills in the system multiply and build on one another.

When it is time for these three language arts teachers to identify their next learning goal, they know, as do their colleagues, how they've advanced along the continuum toward their vision. They set their goal based on where they're headed, and they know they will have the support to get there.

KEY ACTIONS

TEACHERS

Key actions to build and maintain coherence include:

- Communicating within and across teams about highest priority learning needs for both students and adults.
- Sharing individual learning needs with team members to make connections to team learning needs.
- Identifying what learning options would most contribute to critical professional learning needs.
- Explicitly connecting prior learning with future and current learning.
- Communicating team learning challenges and successes across the school and district.
- Advocating with school and district leaders for opportunities to connect with other educators who share similar challenges.
- Speaking out when there is lack of coherence.
- Protecting practices that align the learning team to those that most align with the individual, school, and system priorities.
- Avoiding bringing to the team tempting initiatives that have little or nothing to do with the purpose of the learning team.

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES AND DEPARTMENT HEADS

Key actions to build coherence include:

- Advocating for teacher voice in school and district vision-building efforts.
- Supporting school and team conversations about the common vision to create shared understanding and common language around teaching and learning.
- Helping individual educators see and create connections among all of their professional learning and among their learning and that of their students.
- Creating or facilitating opportunities for teams to share their professional learning challenges and successes across the school and district.
- Identifying expertise within one team that would help another learning team.
- Communicating teacher and team learning needs to school and district leaders and advocating for greater coherence across schools and departments.
- Building skills among members of the learning team to be able to assess, choose, and sustain practices that are most closely aligned with individual, school, and system priorities.
- Helping members of the learning team to assess and determine whether tempting initiatives are relevant or have little or nothing to do with the purpose of the learning team.

PRINCIPALS

Key actions to build coherence include:

- Contributing to a districtwide common vision with the participation of a school leadership team that includes teachers.
- Facilitating school and team conversations about the common vision to create shared understanding and common language around teaching and learning.

Continued on p. 64

KEY ACTIONS, *Continued from p. 63*

- Advocating for professional learning that prepares all educators to meet the needs outlined in the common vision.
- Creating opportunities for teams to share their professional learning challenges and successes across the school and district.
- Holding professional learning accountable to the shared understanding of what high-quality learning entails.
- Using the district's educator evaluation system as an opportunity to connect individual, school, and district learning needs and prioritize meaningful learning.
- Engaging in professional learning that strengthens knowledge and skills in creating coherent learning for every learner in the building.
- Providing members of learning teams opportunities to apply their knowledge of coherent learning to assess, choose, and sustain practices that are most closely aligned with individual, school, and system priorities.
- Refraining from introducing yet another initiative if it has little or nothing to do with the purpose of the learning team.
- Giving the learning team the decision rights to assess and decline an opportunity to pursue a tempting initiative, if they decide it has little or nothing to do with the purpose of the learning team.

CENTRAL OFFICE LEADERS

Key actions to build coherence include:

- Establishing, in concert with educators from every level and building in the district, a districtwide common vision and instructional frameworks that outline the vision for teaching and learning in the system.
- Facilitating ongoing discussions about what the common vision means, where the district's students are in relation to the performance standards, and what steps will be taken to close learning gaps for students and adults.
- Providing a wide range of learning opportunities, resources, and support aligned to the common vision.
- Holding professional learning accountable to the shared understanding of what high-quality learning entails.
- Communicating clearly with all stakeholders about how all initiatives within the system connect to a common vision for learning.
- Eliminating silos among all departments and buildings in a system to increase communication, coherence, and shared understanding.
- Creating opportunities for teams to share their professional learning challenges and successes across the district.
- Using the district's educator evaluation system as an opportunity to connect individual, school, and district learning needs and prioritize meaningful learning.
- Engaging in professional learning that strengthens knowledge and skills in creating coherent learning for every learner in the district.
- Establishing and promoting a process for introducing new initiatives and discontinuing or scaling up existing ones.
- Clarifying and supporting the notions that school-based learning teams possess the autonomy, accountability, responsibility, and right to choose, refine, and fulfill the student and educator learning goals that they believe are most closely aligned with individual, school, and system priorities.



This time with the Academy has been the most valuable professional learning experience of my 28-year career. To focus on the Standards for Professional Learning, select a problem of practice, and work with colleagues at all levels of my organization around a common problem has propelled our district forward in focus and alignment of our professional learning goals to truly impact student achievement.

Joe McFarland, Academy graduate

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TOOL

Defining rules and responsibilities that contribute to coherence

ROLE	HOW DO CURRENT RESPONSIBILITIES HELP CREATE COHERENCE?	WHAT ACTIONS OR SHIFTS MIGHT IMPROVE COHERENCE?	WHAT SPECIFIC OUTCOMES WOULD BE THE RESULT OF SUCH SHIFTS?
Teacher			
Instructional coach			
Department head			
School leader or principal			
Central office leader			

Connect. Belong. Support.

UPDATES

A NETWORK FOR EXCELLENCE

Here's the vision: Teachers have more agency and leadership opportunities within a coherent learning system that aligns resources, provides data to inform decision making, and supports teacher-led collaborative professional learning within continuous improvement cycles.

— Carnegie grant boosts What Matters Now Network to improve teaching and learning

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CARNEGIE GRANT BOOSTS WHAT MATTERS NOW NETWORK TO IMPROVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Carnegie Corporation of New York has awarded a \$600,000 grant to Learning Forward to support the launch of the new What Matters Now Network, a community of state-based coalitions of policy makers and educators. The network will apply improvement science methods within a Networked Improvement Community to strengthen professional learning that measurably improves educator practice and results for students. Learning Forward, a membership association focused on effective professional learning for K-12 educators, will facilitate the network, engaging stakeholders from the state level to the classroom level in each state coalition.

The 2016 National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) landmark report, *What Matters Now: A New Compact for Teaching and Learning*, outlines a vision where teachers have more agency and leadership opportunities within a coherent learning system that aligns resources, provides data to inform decision making, and supports teacher-led collaborative professional learning within continuous improvement cycles. The What Matters Now Network is

In order to work toward relevant and sustainable change, the network will focus on practical solutions that link practice and policy.

designed to achieve this vision so that all students have access to effective teaching and learning. NCTAF and Learning Forward merged earlier this year.

“Learning Forward is honored to have Carnegie Corporation’s support in this effort, a continuation of a long-standing commitment to transforming teaching and learning,” said Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward. “This network will offer states and districts powerful opportunities to focus on developing solutions to substantive problems of practice that will inform and improve policy, along with the support they need to operate as continuous learning organizations.”

The What Matters Now network will build on Learning Forward’s

more than 40 years of experience in designing and facilitating professional learning systems and on its expertise in bringing together learning teams and communities of practice to advance critical systems change. The new network will utilize improvement science strategies to support continuous learning in the multi-stakeholder coalitions, which will focus on improving key aspects of effective professional learning systems such as practice-based collaboration and aligned instructional materials. In order to work toward relevant and sustainable change, the network will focus on practical solutions that link practice and policy.

In the next steps for the initiative, Learning Forward will identify the initial three states to participate in the What Matters Now Network. The states chosen will have demonstrated an interest in issues of professional learning systems as a means to achieve equity and excellence, and will have the political will and capacity for implementing substantive change across systems.

The philanthropic foundation supported earlier stages of this work through a planning grant.

UPDATES

Videos describe lessons using the apps. One of Gauck's lessons, illustrated at right, is making a pictograph, inputting and manipulating data in a problem. Students use Doodle Buddy to create graphs, add audio in SeeSaw, then upload to SeeSaw digital portfolios.



NEW RESOURCES FROM INNOVATIVE TEACHER TEAM

Innovation Classroom (www.innovationclassroom.com) highlights how technology can transform teaching and learning. A selection of video lessons for math, science, language arts, life skills, and social studies offers a window into how innovative teachers are leveraging the latest apps and tools to engage students in new ways.



Heather Gauck

Created by and for teachers, the lesson videos offer short, targeted strategies for using specific technology applications to achieve particular instruction and assessment objectives. For

example, videos include reflections on learning using Padlet, math exit ticket using Socrative, literary elements with Pic Collage Kids, and making pictographs using Doodle Buddy.

Heather Gauck, the project organizer and team leader for Innovation Classroom, is a K-3 resource teacher in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Recognized by PBS as one of 2015's digital innovators, Gauck is also a recipient of the Michigan Educator Voice Fellowship 2014-15 and was the lead Michigan Educator

Gauck and members of her team will share more about this work at the Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida, in session 1404: Innovation Classroom: Technology PD + Social Media=Everyone Learns! on Monday, Dec. 4, 2017.

Voice Fellow 2015-16. Gauck is one of several teachers from Michigan currently contributing to the bank of lesson videos. The other teachers on her team are: Carolyn Bolduc, Grand Rapids Public Schools; Jennifer Bond, Walled Lake Consolidated Schools; Josh Bridges, Dowagiac Union Schools; Karen Brummans, Holland Public Schools; Kathy Kanu-Thompson, Grand Rapids Public Schools; Kristin Kochheiser, Waverly Community Schools; and Matt McCullough, Schoolcraft Community Schools.

"One of our goals in this work is to build a thriving network of teachers who can learn from one another and co-create knowledge about the role of innovation in shifting how students learn," said Gauck. "It isn't enough to use technology in engaging ways – we really need to spread what we know from teacher to teacher to have the widest possible impact," she said.

Innovation Classroom is funded by Mark Zuckerberg's StartUp Foundation. Learning Forward serves as an additional partner on the project.

BOOK CLUB

Assessing Impact:

Evaluating Professional Learning
(3rd edition)

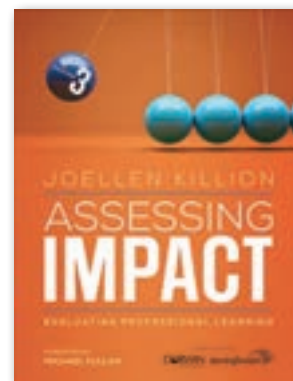
By Joellen Killion

This third edition of Joellen Killion's essential resource guides readers through the rigors of producing an effective, in-depth analysis of professional learning. The methods outlined here help readers:

- Adhere to changes in policy relating to professional learning;
- Facilitate the use of extensive datasets crucial for measuring feasibility, equity, sustainability, and impact of professional learning;
- Produce more powerful, effective professional learning; and
- Evaluate the effectiveness and impact of professional learning to make data-informed decisions and increase quality and results,

Through a partnership with Corwin Press, Learning Forward members can add the Book Club to their membership at any time and receive four books a year for \$69 (for U.S. mailing addresses).

To receive this book, add the Book Club to your membership before Dec. 1. For more information about this or any membership package, call **800-727-7288** or email office@learningforward.org.



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.

WRITE FOR THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

• Themes are posted at www.learningforward.org/learningprofessional.

• 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/learningprofessional.

SHARE YOUR STORY

Learning Forward is eager to read manuscripts from educators at every level in every position. If your work includes a focus on effective professional learning, we want to hear your story.

The Learning Professional publishes a range of types of articles, including:

- First-person accounts of change efforts;
- Practitioner-focused articles about school- and district-level initiatives;
- Program descriptions and results from schools, districts, or external partners;
- How-tos from practitioners and thought leaders; and
- Protocols and tools with guidance on use and application.

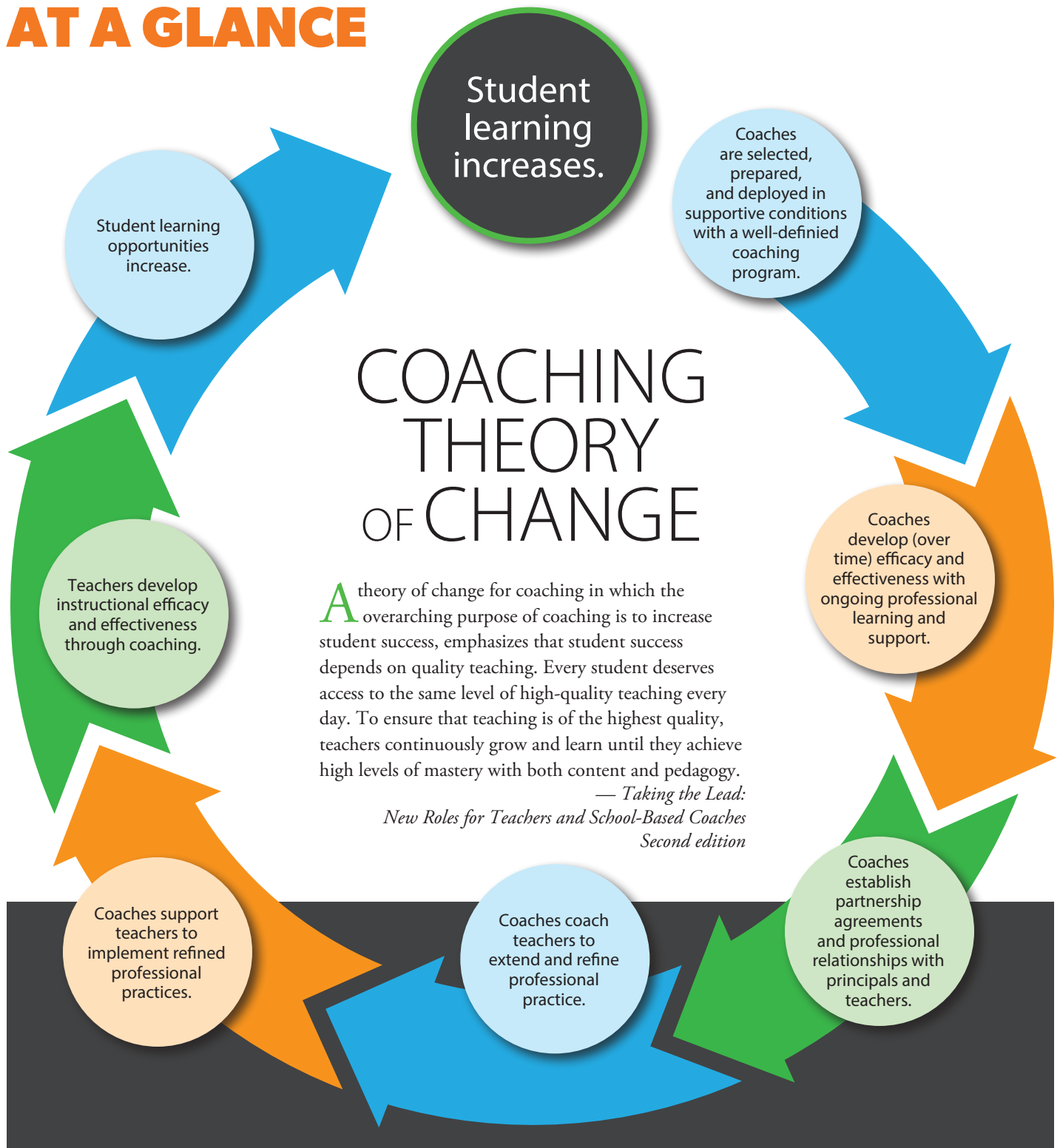
To learn more about key topics and what reviewers look for in article submissions, visit www.learningforward.org/learningprofessional.



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AT A GLANCE



FROM THE BOOK

**TAKING THE LEAD:
New roles for teachers
and school-based
coaches** *Second edition*
JOELLEN KILLION
AND CINDY HARRISON

The second edition updates Learning Forward's essential text about the complex and multifaceted roles of teacher leaders and school-based coaches.

System leaders may use *Taking the Lead* as they advocate the design of a coaching program focused on team, school, and district learning goals. School-based teacher

leaders will gain clarity about how to effectively fulfill 10 roles as they support teachers' ongoing growth.

Order at **store.
learningforward.org.**



THROUGH THE LENS

OF LEARNING FORWARD'S STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

LEARNING FORWARD'S STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students ...

Learning Communities

... occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.

Leadership

... requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.

Resources

... requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.

Data

... uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.

Learning Designs

... integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

Implementation

... applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.

Outcomes

... aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

Many of the articles in this issue of *The Learning Professional* demonstrate Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning in action. Use this tool to deepen your own understanding of what standards implementation might look like and to explore implementation in various contexts. In this issue, we highlight three examples.

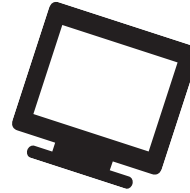
STANDARD

IN ACTION

TO CONSIDER

DATA

In action: In "Accentuate the formative," the authors describe how they use rubrics and a video observation process to strengthen teachers' use of formative assessment to improve student outcomes (p. 24).



1. How do rubrics that describe levels of practice and video of classroom lessons complement each other, no matter what content teachers are covering?
2. What kinds of data are available to educators in videos of authentic teaching episodes?

IMPLEMENTATION

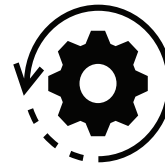
In "I am mentor, I am coach," the authors describe how mentors of school leaders adopt a coaching mindset to support the development of learning leaders in schools (p. 52).



1. In what ways do coaches or mentors recognize the challenges of change and support educators throughout a change process?
2. What elements of a coaching or mentoring relationship contribute to learners' opportunities to reflect on constructive feedback?

OUTCOMES

The article "Process for discovery" explores how an international school supports an ever-changing faculty to effectively implement project-based learning for students (p. 35).



1. How does developing sharp clarity around student standards contribute to consistent instruction despite teachers who come and go frequently?
2. What connections might schools or school systems make between project-based learning for students and how educators are supported to implement project-based learning?

FIND YOUR OWN!

There are many other examples of the standards in action throughout *The Learning Professional*. Find a story that you think exemplifies this and create your own questions.



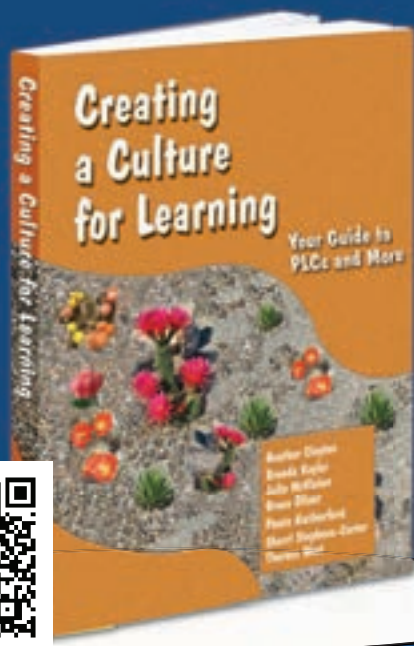
Bonus question:

Can you find other standards within your story that are relevant? Many data stories, for example, also deal with implementation.

Learn more about Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning at www.learningforward.org/standards-for-professional-learning.



Contact Just ASK to have one of the authors work in your district to help you use these successful culture-building strategies.



Creating a Culture for Learning

Your Guide to PLCs and More

by Heather Clayton, Brenda Kaylor, Julie McVicker, Bruce Oliver, Paula Rutherford, Sherri Stephens-Carter, and Theresa West

This book is based on the belief that in order to succeed in their commitment to the achievement of high standards by all students schools must create cultures of learning that promote professional growth.

It includes self-assessments, reviews of the literature, numerous practitioner examples, and online tools and templates to help you answer these questions:

- What are the characteristics of schools fully engaged in professional learning?
- What structures need to be in place to promote and support learning cultures that result in high levels of student learning?
- What knowledge, skills, and attitudes are needed to create, implement, and maintain cultures for learning?
- How can schools best use data to inform practice?
- What are the non-negotiables in such schools?



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