essentials KEEPING UP WITH HOT TOPICS IN THE FIELD

PUTTING DATA TO WORK

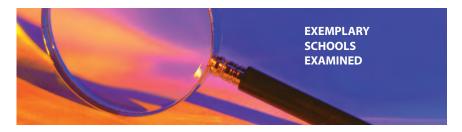**"Effectively linking teachers and students: The key to improving teacher quality"**
Data Quality Campaign, July 2010

High-quality data are critical in developing definitions and policies to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement. This policy brief explores the challenges faced by states and districts and presents examples of successful policies and strategies. While data is useful to policy makers, teachers can use the information to assess and strengthen their own instruction — and student outcomes. Above all, the report argues, quality information is necessary for making decisions related to personnel, professional development, programs, curriculum, and more.
http://dataqualitycampaign.org/ resources/details/993

EXEMPLARY SCHOOLS EXAMINED

"How high schools become exemplary: Ways that leadership raises achievement and narrows gaps by improving instruction in 15 public high schools"
The Achievement Gap Initiative, June 2009

How do some schools become models of achievement? A report from the Achievement Gap Initiative's annual conference looks at 15 exemplary public high schools from around the country. An analysis of the presentations about these schools and the subsequent Q-and-A sessions reveals that what the schools share is strong leadership. When the schools' leadership teams focused on improving instruction — organizing teacher learning sessions, expressing clear definitions for achievement, monitoring students and teachers, and working collaboratively with their peers — student outcomes also improved.
www.agi.harvard.edu/events/2009Conference/2009AGIReport.php

MIDDLE SCHOOLS PROJECT
Success at the Core

A pilot project in Washington state, Success at the Core, is showing promise for its positive impact on teaching as well as student achievement. After wrapping up its trial year, an independent evaluation of the online professional development program found that middle schools using the tool kit reported improvements in student engagement as well as in professional culture, leadership capacity, and instructional focus. The free program is available to all Washington state middle school educators. Registration grants access to seven modules designed for leadership teams and 24 instructional strategies for teachers.
www.successatthecore.com

ALIGN POLICY AT ALL LEVELS

"Improving school leadership: The promise of cohesive leadership systems"
The Wallace Foundation, December 2009

Principals play a critical role in improving school instruction and achievement. Coordinating school, district, and state policies related to leadership standards, training, and work conditions — creating what The Wallace Foundation calls a "cohesive leadership system" — are essential for boosting that role. The report, focusing on 10 states and 17 school districts, found that creating policy alignment is a challenge, but in areas with significant progress, principals reported feeling more effective and empowered in their efforts to make academic improvements.
www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/CurrentAreasofFocus/EducationLeadership/Pages/ Improving-School-Leadership-The-Promise-of-Cohesive-Leadership-Systems.aspx

THE MANY USES OF TECHNOLOGY

"Teachers' use of educational technology in U.S. public schools: 2009"
U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, May 2010

This report presents national data on public elementary and secondary school teachers' use of technology. The study also explores professional development and teachers' use of technology to research student data. For example, in a 2009 survey featured in the study, 94% of teachers reported that their school or district network had a system for entering or reviewing students' grades, and 90% used such a system to look up the results of student assessments.
http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2010040

THE EUROPEAN SCENE

"Creating effective teaching and learning environments: First results from TALIS"
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Commission, November 2009

A 2009 survey of teachers in 23 European countries found that effective feedback, variety, and scheduling flexibility are essential to teachers' involvement in and experience of professional development. Teachers reported that professional development is an established aspect of their work lives, highlighting its potential for improving instructional practices and student achievement. Integrating training into teachers' existing schedules, enhancing feedback and appraisal, and fostering positive work environments are recommended. The data offer the first internationally comparable information on European teachers' working conditions.
www.oecd.org/document/0/0,3343,en_2649_39263231_38052160_1_1_1_1,00.html

QUALITY TEACHING MATTERS

"Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools"
Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup, August 2010

Better professional development is essential to improving the quality of the nation's teachers, and quality teachers are key to strengthening schools and boosting student achievement. These are some of the findings of an annual national poll conducted by Gallup for the professional association Phi Delta Kappa. Nearly half of the poll's respondents described teacher learning as a critical factor in improving student learning, and improving learning was rated the single most critical issue facing the nation's schools. The responses indicate the importance of providing teachers with high-quality, consistent, data-driven professional development.
www.pdkintl.org/kappan/poll.htm