

# editor's note/ TRACY CROW

## LEADING WITH PASSION AND PRINCIPLES

*"Principles shape our thoughts, words, and actions. They influence our decisions. They guide us in problem solving. They serve as touchstones that we continually return to when we face conflict, dilemmas, or challenges. They set a common foundation shared by members of a community."*

Stephanie Hirsh and Joellen Killion open their book *The Learning Educator: A New Era For Professional Learning* (NSDC, 2007, p.11) with these words as they outline a set of eight principles to guide professional learning in the coming years.

After reading about effective professional learning for principals, the connection between the words "principle" and "principal" seems obvious. If we replace the word principle in the paragraph above with the word principal, we have a rough, if simplistic, vision for the effective school leader. In the context of systems and schools that embrace effective professional learning, principals — that is, school leaders — nurture environments where their sound leadership influences shared decision making. Principals guide schools in solving tough problems for children. They help to establish a community with a common foundation.

In NSDC's vision of the learning school, the common foundation is a focus on student achievement. As we work to fulfill our purpose that every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves, we envision principals as leaders in learning. They must be immersed in learning each day, just as teachers and students are. They must have opportunities for collaboration, time for reflection, resources, and teachers who help them develop content and pedagogical knowledge. They need networks of peers to explore specialized leadership topics and challenges.

As principals develop the knowledge to support a focus on student learning, they can't ignore their wide range of responsibilities in schools. They can, however, take a stand about what comes first in schools. This is a matter of principle. School systems and leadership development programs are finding ways to foster such growth, supporting new principals as well as veterans, crafting experiences that encourage principals to model learning practices.

You'll encounter the voices of several principled, passionate people in this issue of *JSD*. With Parker Palmer (p. 12) encouraging us to live on the edge and follow our convictions, and Richard Elmore (p. 42) urging educators to take a moral stance for the sake of kids and for the sake of the profession, articles about principal learning are bookended by clear calls to action.

As you'll read in the articles that follow, principal learning is shaped at the state level, systemwide, and school by school. Principal support comes from coaches, superintendents, peers, and learning communities. Also, find additional resources for more reading in the Snapshots section on p. 60.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this or any issue of *JSD*. Please email me at [tracy.crow@nsdc.org](mailto:tracy.crow@nsdc.org) to share feedback and ideas. ■



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

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