THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

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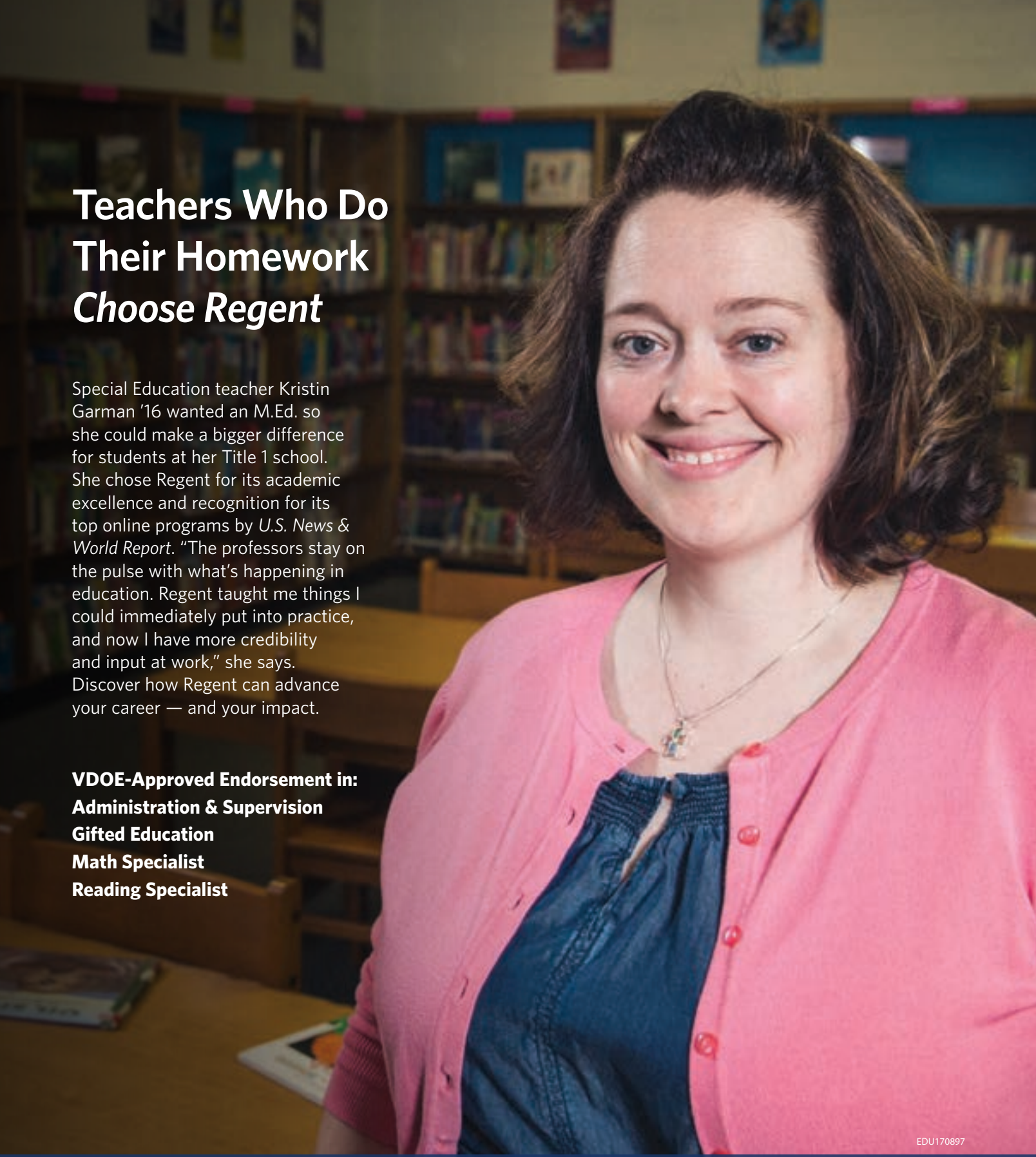

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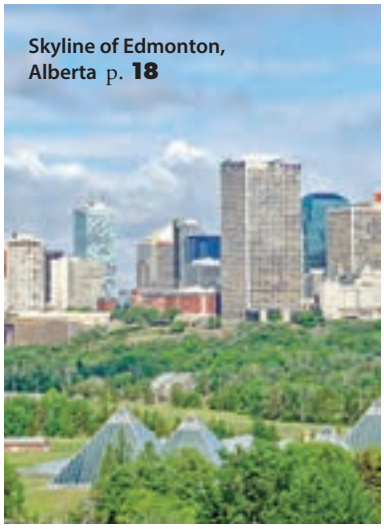
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- Understand how equity outcomes require critical connections among effective teaching, professional learning, and curriculum resources;
- Learn practical processes for identifying, evaluating, selecting, and implementing curriculum materials in different subject areas; and
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WHO SHOULD ATTEND:

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- **Instructional coaches** and teacher leaders who support teacher teams and PLCs to strengthen their capacity to teach all children.
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HERE WE GO

Tracy Crow

They do the right thing for students

When we consider how to launch high-quality professional learning effectively, Learning Forward has plenty of advice for logical steps to take, and you'll find just that in Stephanie Hirsh's column on p. 8. We know the importance of considering change management processes and assessing educators' readiness for change. We're convinced that it is critical to have a vision for what professional learning is intended to accomplish and who will be responsible for planning, supporting, implementing, and evaluating the learning. And we also know that sometimes educators don't kick off professional learning in a prescribed fashion, and yet it still helps teachers grow and improve.

In this issue of *The Learning Professional*, we're excited to feature several practitioners who shared their "great starts": the launch of promising professional learning tailored to meet specific student and educator learning needs. The examples we highlight launched their work through a range of pathways: a spark of inspiration in a standardized testing workshop (see p. 40), a desire to leverage powerful collaboration to address stagnant math performance (see p. 34), or a grant-funded opportunity to support far-flung schools (see p. 28).

The educators in these examples do follow many of the steps Learning Forward would recommend and are certainly well-versed in how to support professional learning meaningfully. The element that stands out as common across all of these examples, however, is something else entirely: their commitment to do the right thing for students. This commitment isn't unique to these educators by any means. Doing the right thing for students and being an educator go hand in hand.

In the articles in this issue, we get a close-up view of educators doing the right thing for students by crafting new ways of learning, shaping innovative means of connecting with new information and their peers, and deciding they can come up with solutions to the problems they're seeing in their schools. In "Middle school flips the script" (p. 24), for example, enthusiastic educators dove into a near-frenzy of learning to integrate technology, with coaches using "every professional development method at our disposal to prepare teachers in these practices." Despite their passion to dive into this work, the educators weren't satisfied with their results, so they took the difficult step of reconfiguring their entire approach.

They embody, as so many education professionals do, one of Learning Forward's beliefs: "All educators have an obligation to improve their practice." Of all of our beliefs, this is the one most likely to raise eyebrows: Obligation is a strong word, and very few of us appreciate such a mandate. Yet we're convinced it's the right word, because improving practice so that

more students learn — and ultimately so all students learn — is the right thing to do. When all educators shoulder that obligation, we come closer to our aspirations that all students will experience great teaching and learning.

We hope you find inspiration from the educators featured here. We'd love to hear what sparks your desire to do more and what moments have led you to do the right thing. The educators actively engaged in creating learning that results in ongoing improvements in what they do and what their colleagues do are the superheroes we need in every school.

•

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VOICES

OBSERVE PEOPLE IN THEIR CONTEXT

"Designers observe stakeholders in their respective contexts to learn about the physical and social conditions that shape their experience, interview them to gain deeper insights and qualitative data about their current state and daily lives, and immerse themselves in the world of their stakeholders in an attempt to gain a first-person understanding of the underlying needs that the reform or solution intends to address."

WANT TO CREATE LASTING CHANGE? LISTEN FIRST, DESIGN SECOND p. 14

CALL TO ACTION

Stephanie Hirsh

What it takes to make a great start

One of the most frequent questions I have been asked over the years is: What are the essential conditions for launching a new initiative? Often what people want to know is whether they should kick off their new program with volunteers or should they mandate total involvement.

I typically answer with the following advice.

Decide who should be involved at the start. If you don't have a choice about whether to implement and time is short, then bring everyone on board immediately. Opting out isn't an option, so don't sugarcoat it. And be prepared to support everyone on your team through the change process.

On the other hand, if you have some control over how quickly to implement a new initiative, then beginning with those most willing to go first makes sense. That way you can work out the early bugs often associated with new initiatives. This gives time to build credibility with the skeptics who have raised concerns or questions about the initiative.

Finally, if you don't know from the start when or if a particular initiative will be implemented at full scale, then start with those who are excited and interested in participating in a pilot. Encourage some skeptics to join in because, if results are favorable, you will need the skeptics to help if you decide to recommend full participation.

Once you've figured out the people who should be on board to ensure the success of any new initiative, these next two steps will create conditions for a great start that leads to successful outcomes.

Do your homework. Everyone has experienced this example in one way or another: A district administrator goes to a conference and hears about a great program. She is so excited by what she has experienced that she decides it would be perfect for her system or school. When she tries to sell everyone at home on the idea, it's tough going. So many of these wonderful ideas have been introduced over the years and few have produced the results promised by their advocates, leaving educators skeptical of their merits.

Rather than introducing an idea because the presentation was compelling, conduct the most thorough investigation you can about the program. In doing so, you will gather the information necessary to affirm a decision to launch as well as conditions that led to success.

Before initiating any change, pose the questions that give you the confidence you need to begin. Here are some questions to consider while you collect data on the initiative:

- What does research say about the initiative/program?
- Is there evidence about the impact of the program in a range of settings?
- Has it worked in settings similar to yours?
- What can you learn about the conditions that were present when it was most successful?
- Are those conditions present in your system and/or school?
- What are the essential knowledge and skills teachers and administrators need to produce successful outcomes?

Find a school or system similar to your own where the outcomes

Continued on p. 12

BEING FORWARD

Alan Ingram

Lessons learned in the military apply to education, too

We can learn a lot by being intentional in our efforts to reflect on our work. I've spent much of my career engaged in professional learning to build the capacity of individuals, learning teams, schools, districts, and a state education agency's impact in the field.

In addition to my experience as a federal programs director, superintendent, and deputy commissioner at a state education agency, I spent almost 22 years serving in arguably the best education and training organization in the world: the United States Air Force.

A large portion of my Air Force career centered on education and training in leadership development through the Enlisted Professional Military Education program for airmen in all stages of their careers. In the Air Force, providing a clear continuum of professional learning is necessary to inspire and develop enlisted leaders with the moral framework of integrity, service, and excellence.

This program differed from the technical training members received for their military job specialties. The lessons I learned from my Air Force leadership development experiences focused on what I would describe as an integrated approach to:

1. Attaining personal mastery for primary duty skills and learning about yourself as a leader and follower while assimilating to the culture and adopting the core values of the military profession;
2. Understanding the broader organizational perspective, valuing diversity, understanding team dynamics, and embracing continuous improvement in leadership competencies to strengthen capabilities and execute operations; and
3. Gaining a thorough understanding of how to apply organizational and team dynamics cross-functionally while mastering leadership competencies and leading teams to achieve synergistic results.

Not unlike my Air Force education and training experience, Learning Forward's strategic priorities are tied to improved practice, collective responsibility, and a culture of learning. However, looking back, there are a few things I would tell my younger self about professional learning and continuous improvement.

First, every journey is different, and we all have unique learning needs, interests, and aspirations. As a school, district, or system leader, I would be more intentional about integrating learner choice into personalized professional learning for teacher leaders and principals while considering the learning needs of the system (e.g. where are the biggest needs/gaps in relation to the student learning needs and educator competencies).

For example, learner choice is not an either-or proposition but rather requires that education leaders find the right balance to ensure adult learners hone skills to succeed at all levels of the organization and achieve their goals.

Second, I would spend more time connecting the dots (alignment), narrowing a system's professional learning focus, and finding the right collaborative structure to minimize random acts of improvement and maximize resources (e.g. high-quality curriculum tied to standards, instructional materials, and assessments).

For example, as a district superintendent, I would expect my team and myself to be more deliberate in assessing impact and refining plans to ensure the intended outcomes for new student learning.

Finally, I would remind myself that, as system leaders, we don't have to know everything. Hire wisely, develop and trust the team, and surround yourself with others who share the vision, passion, and commitment to equity and excellence in public education for all students.

•

Alan Ingram is president of Learning Forward's board of trustees. ■

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

Heather Lageman

Awardees' grant projects demonstrate foundation's impact

Built on the belief that we need to support more people in the profession, the Learning Forward Foundation has been leveraging money, time, and relationships through coaching to transform beliefs and practice in adult learning since it began as the Lynne Chidley Foundation in 1985.

Centered around the Standards for Professional Learning and their power to transform educator practice and student learning, the foundation's impact has a ripple effect across individuals, teams, and organizations.

Beginning with the application process and continuing through the selection of awardees, their ongoing reports of progress, and Touchpoint conversations, the Learning Forward Foundation maintains an unwavering focus on the standards and key principles for professional learning.

Touchpoint conversations are the foundation's method for supporting awardees as they create a structure for learning and a place for collaborative reflection. A Touchpoint is a one-hour phone conversation during which awardees have time with other foundation members to reflect on their change project and/or problem of practice, identify intended outcomes and activities to reach desired changes, celebrate successes, and identify challenges of implementation.

The Touchpoint is a safe space to reflect on learning. It is not judgmental or evaluative. During these conversations, awardees provide examples of how they apply the standards and key principles in their project. This process contributes to and reinforces the vision and mission of both Learning Forward and the foundation.

BRIGHT SPOTS AND CHALLENGES

In Learning Forward Foundation's living laboratory of learning, we see similar bright spots and challenges bubbling up in the larger educational ecosystem. Through the life of a grant or scholarship, awardees grow in their knowledge and skills about professional learning as essential to creating impact in their school and district system.

They shift their thinking about professional learning as a series of discrete components to a way of thinking that connects and uses the standards and principles seamlessly to create a culture of professional learning. Awardees are building a plan to ensure continued growth and sustainability beyond the life of the grant.

Bright spots include seeing change and improvement in professional learning systems, shifting educator practice, creating cultures of professional learning, and seeing awardees come to understand and integrate the Standards for Professional Learning into their work.

CELEBRATING IMPACT

Each grant project and the processes surrounding it are a living laboratory of the Learning Forward mission — how to transform learning across systems. Here are some examples of grant projects and their impact.

Shannon Terry, Patsy Hochman Academy Scholarship, 2016
Kelly Hastings, Principal as Leader of Professional Learning Grant, 2016

Selected for her commitment to growing as a district-based professional learning leader in Texas, Shannon Terry is working with fellow Learning Forward Academy class member Kelly Hastings to collaborate on building stronger PLCs as one strategy for advancing teacher agency and collective efficacy as a districtwide priority. They are using this simple equation to frame the conversation:

New teacher induction program + Teacher agency = Collaborative culture, collective efficacy, and attainment of individual and systemwide performance goals


Terry


Hastings

In Arlington ISD, they are using a new teacher induction program to advance teacher agency. After reviewing research on how teacher agency drives professional learning to advance collective efficacy, Arlington ISD is scaling teacher agency so that every stakeholder in the system is equipped to exercise agency.

In doing so, the system provides the infrastructure to allow each stakeholder to maximize agency and be responsive as participants engaged in professional learning. Each level within the organization exercises agency (district leaders, campus administrators, instructional support staff, teachers, and students) to create synergy around the work of improving student learning.

Ronnie Edwards, Learning Forward Foundation Academy Scholarship, 2017

In Ronnie Edwards' work as principal at Mayde Creek High School in Houston, Texas, deep learning is beginning to develop as the teachers learn in community with a variety of educator backgrounds and expertise in content areas.


Edwards

Staff have come together to make a difference in learning through common language both for teacher and student learning. Learning to use teacher voice is leading to teaching that creates student voice.

"In the short time I have been working with the Learning Forward Academy, I have been able to make valuable connections to other educational leaders from across the nation who are immersed in the work of school improvement," Edwards says. "They have encouraged and inspired my work. The insight and learning has provided essential support for job-embedded professional learning on my campus as we begin to implement lab classrooms to improve instructional practice."

Sarah Diggs,
Kris Woods,
Systems Grant, 2016

Learning Forward Foundation Systems Grant recipient leaders Sarah Diggs and Kris Woods, with the guidance and support of coach Kay Psencik, are thoughtfully, strategically, and analytically transforming the Hartford, Connecticut, school organization into a culture of continuous professional learning.


Diggs


Woods

In their second year of funding from the Systems Grant, Diggs says, "We want to transform our current district organization into a learning system where people understand that adult professional learning is the biggest driver for student learning."

The Standards for Professional Learning serve as the anchor for guiding change. "Everything that we do is driven by the standards in an authentic way," Diggs says.

The Hartford leaders will now support others as they learn about the standards and how to use them to guide change and improvement — first for the adults, then for the students. "We've gone from a surface level of what the standards say to an applied level in practice," Diggs says.

Challenges include constant change of leadership, ambiguous role definitions and expectations, difficulty creating shared responsibility with all stakeholders, and difficulty collecting sufficient data and evidence of progress to inform changes.

As we work with and learn from our awardees, it is a critical balance to value the context of learning in each school, district, and region and, at the same time, create deep understanding that builds the conditions for professional learning documented in the standards.

SYNTHESIZING FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

This living laboratory of learning is committed to synthesis, analysis, and reflection. We have found that these key elements support continuous improvement in learning and leading:

- Nurturing and supporting awardees through reflective processes and cross-role engagement in the learning process becomes evident over time.
- Enhancing professional relationships creates an environment in which shared responsibility and mutual accountability for student learning thrive.
- Building professional learning networks allows awardees continued advancement in knowledge and practice.
- Increasing systemic thinking promotes the ability to connect the dots for focus, clarity, and coherence toward meeting intended outcomes.

Together, it is our time to inquire, to question, to create, and to act.

As we work to refine and enhance the foundation awardee experience, we are focusing on:

- Data collection and documentation of impact; and
- Knowledge production: What new learning is being produced and how it contributes to the advancement of Learning Forward and Learning Forward Foundation vision and mission.

Looking ahead, our collaboration will focus on increasing documentation of impact and sharing that evidence in formal reports, as well as identifying the enabling conditions that allow professional learning to grow in a system.

Together, Learning Forward and Learning Forward Foundation are aligned in our commitment to transform learning across systems and support the development of educators' capacity to improve student learning.

Together, it is our time to inquire, to question, to create, and to act.

Together, it is our opportunity to pivot toward the positive and the power of us.

Together, let's shine the light of professional learning on the students, educators, and learners of the world.

•

Heather Lageman (heather.lageman@gmail.com) serves as the executive director of leadership development for Baltimore County Schools in the Office of Organizational Development. She is chair of the Learning Forward Foundation and president of the Learning Forward Maryland Affiliate. ■

Continued from p. 8

were similar to those you are seeking. Interview or, even better, visit educators at that site to learn what contributed to the success. This will provide essential background to promoting success.

Create a strong communication plan. Even if you opt for the pilot approach, many people will be critical to the ultimate institutionalization of a program. Consider their role and what they will want to know.

For example, if the program results in a change to the school schedule, parents may be interested to know how something that initially appears to be an inconvenience to them will ultimately result in something that benefits their children.

If the program requires substantive professional learning to implement successfully, what information will district administrators need if their support and resources are essential to effective implementation? Consider these questions as the foundation for building a successful communication plan.

- Who needs to know?
- Why do they need to know?
- What information do they need?
- How will you provide it?
- Who else can help you communicate meaningfully to various audiences concerned with the change?
- How will you share successes and challenges as the program continues to build support?

To what degree do these three areas for consideration resonate with your own experiences? What else have you found is essential to a great start? Please share so we can all benefit from your insights.

•

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

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COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

Nader Twal

Want to create lasting change? Listen first, design second

The educational landscape around standards, assessment, professional development, and funding is changing at a rapid pace. How can education institutions — and educators — respond with a balance of urgency and coherence? How do we temper the need for risk-taking and innovation with the responsibility to deliver on the promise of public education for every student every day, showing that our work has impact on student learning?

In the words of Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn, "The solution requires the individual and collective ability to build shared meaning, capacity, and commitment to action. When large numbers of people have a deeply understood sense of what needs to be done — and see their part in achieving that purpose — coherence emerges and powerful things happen" (Fullan & Quinn, 2015).

For the Long Beach Unified School District in California, Learning Forward's Redesign PD Community of Practice has been a catalyst for understanding and accelerating the district's innovation efforts to address the changing education landscape, especially in the context of personalized professional development.

A partnership of 22 school systems from across the U.S., the Redesign PD Community of Practice was organized around these six core elements as the group tackled issues of coherence and measuring impact across our systems:

1. Clear focus on a shared problem of practice.
2. Active learning through a process of inquiry.
3. Collective ownership of the work and one another's success.
4. Appropriate mix of partners.
5. Sufficient commitment to supporting implementation and experimentation efforts.
6. An effective structure of governance and decision-making.

These core elements offered the group a framework for building our collective professional responsibility without devolving into "pervasive groupthink" or "contrived collegiality" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2015). Each element gave us a way to define our shared *what* and a context to amplify our efforts with others who share our lens. Collectively, they describe the conditions by which we work and interact, but do not prescribe *how* we are to innovate our solutions.

DESIGN THINKING

To bring the work of our community to fruition, the Long Beach Unified *how* found its richest answer in design thinking, which is defined as a creative, deliberate problem-solving process that puts people at the heart of design.

Using design thinking, educators frame core problems of practice in a growth mindset and convene a diverse group of stakeholders in innovating, prototyping, and testing ideas before going to scale. This is done using an interactive slide presentation that mimics the function of a formative assessment app a school district might deploy in all math classrooms.

The process allows designers and reformers to test the viability and potential impact of their ideas with real users before committing to systemic action.

This approach builds on the idea that by tapping into our self-efficacy — our creative confidence — we can accelerate successful implementation efforts and reframes problems as opportunities to design a solution. It leads with a question, rather than a solution, and engages those whom the solution is intended to serve throughout the process. Clarity and specificity are critical to this process.

In this way, design thinking is an opportunity to listen first and design second. Design thinking hinges on the idea that the people most impacted by the solution should most inform its design and the essential question it attempts to answer. We need to listen to their needs before we form our response and reform.

Designers observe stakeholders in their respective contexts to learn about the physical and social conditions that shape their experience, interview them to gain deeper insights and qualitative data about their current state and daily lives, and immerse themselves in the world of their stakeholders in an attempt

to gain a first-person understanding of the underlying needs that the reform or solution intends to address.

The fundamental assumption is that the root of innovative solutions lies in meeting a real need that our stakeholders have — a need that we can only understand by observing the people for whom we are designing, interviewing them to hear their interpretation of their experience, and seeing the world through their eyes.

Otherwise, we risk answering questions that need not be asked or solving perceived challenges with best, well-informed intentions, rather than meaningful and sustained ones. Consider how often we review the data and make what we believe are informed assumptions about the underlying cause, only to find that more qualitative conversations in the field would have offered the context we needed to propose ideas that would create lasting impact.

Imagine, for instance, what solutions we could inspire if we shadowed English language learners for a day (from breakfast to dinner), interviewed them, their families, their teachers, and then attempted to spend a day in a foreign language class where the teacher only spoke the language of the discipline. What might we learn that their achievement data alone cannot tell us?

Listening before taking action

requires an intense commitment. It challenges assumptions and counts the insights of the stakeholder as equal to the designer. The actual problem or design challenge can only be defined and understood when seen through the eyes of the stakeholder.

DESIGN THINKING IN ACTION

Using the sentence starter, "How might we...," the team writes a series of questions that gets at the heart of the problem of practice or issue at hand. Using this frame allows team members to defer judgment and separate the problem/opportunity from the solution. This allows the design team to ideate freely, without restriction.

In this phase, the task is simple: Dream of relevant solutions that will meet the unique stakeholder needs. Here are ways to make that happen:

- Build on the ideas of others, using "Yes, and ... ."
- Defer judgment.
- Generate many ideas (quantity over quality).
- Capture *all* ideas.
- Be brief.

At the end, team members select the ideas that they will prototype for testing by the stakeholder. Since prototyping is an iterative process, there will be many versions of the proposed solution on the way to the final choice.

Ultimately, though, the team will have to build something *tangible* so that the stakeholder can engage the solution and so that the stakeholder's feedback is meaningful and timely. In essence, prototyping and testing with the stakeholder allows the design team to calibrate its proposed solution.

In hearing feedback as stakeholders interact with the prototype, designers once again learn more about users' underlying needs and wants, helping them to further understand the people for whom they are designing.

The best part of prototyping is that it allows the design team to test the idea in a less expensive context. Prototypes can be:

- Physical: Build a model.
- Drawing: Sketch the final part in detail.
- Wireframe: Mock up before building.
- Role play: Especially when solutions focus on stakeholder experiences.

During this phase, feedback from the interaction between design team and stakeholder shapes the final solution. A critical condition for success lies in a fundamental norm of prototyping: The design team cannot defend the prototype so that all ideas are heard on the way to a final solution — a co-constructed one that is sure to be implemented with greater fidelity because it responds to an articulated and well-understood need.

RESULTS

As we engaged in this process with the Redesign PD Community of Practice, we saw the design-implementation gap that has plagued many initiatives diminish substantially. Rather than simply theorizing solutions anchored in research, we were able to accelerate the implementation of effective, innovative responses to the changing ecosystem in education without compromising our commitment to quality and our focus on preparing students for the complexities of the 21st century.

"At its core, [this] creative confidence is about believing in your ability to create change in the world around you," write Tom Kelley and David Kelley. "It is the conviction that you can achieve what you set out to do. We think this self-assurance, this belief in your creative capacity, lies at the heart of innovation" (Kelley & Kelley, 2013).

Perhaps the answers to complex education challenges lie in the nexus of these networked communities and the creative design process. In Long Beach, we found answers while huddled with our stakeholders, calling up our creative confidence to meet the challenge.

TO LEARN MORE

Watch a brief video overview of how the design thinking approach informs the P-16 College Promise Partnership in Long Beach, California, at **www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EtRHgHe0OY&feature=youtu.be.**

For more information on design thinking, visit **https://dschool.stanford.edu/resources-collections/getting-started-with-design-thinking.**

For more information on Redesign PD Community of Practice, visit **www.learningforward.org/learning-opportunities/redesign-pd-community-of-practice.**

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Examine. Study. Understand.

RESEARCH

RESEARCH REVIEW p. 18

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN ALBERTA, CANADA

In Learning Forward's case study of educator professional learning in Alberta, Canada, researchers found:

QUALITY CONTENT

- Evidence and inquiry feature prominently in existing professional learning frameworks.
- Supporting the needs of diverse learners is a priority.
- Student needs drive teachers' learning.
- Teachers generally perceive a reduction in autonomy in their own learning.

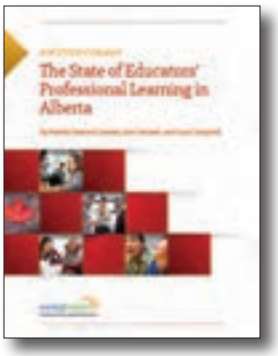
LEARNING DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

- Opportunities for teacher professional development vary considerably.
- Collaboration is a prominent feature.
- Various forms of job-embedded learning both in and beyond the school are developing.

SUPPORT AND SUSTAINABILITY

- High-quality professional learning exists, but not every teacher has access to it.
- Teacher workload has challenged educators' ability to find time to participate in professional learning.

Source: Osmond-Johnson, P., Zeichner, K., & Campbell, C. (2017). *The state of educators' professional learning in Alberta: Executive summary.* Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.



This is an excerpt from *The State of Educators' Professional Learning in Alberta: Executive Summary* (Learning Forward, 2018), part of a series produced by Learning Forward. Coinciding with the 2016 Annual Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, Learning Forward commissioned and supported a study of professional learning across the nation of Canada.

A research team led by Carol Campbell, associate professor of leadership and educational change at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, examined the professional learning that educators experience in the provinces and territories of Canada. The study identifies key components and features of effective professional learning and highlights findings from what educators in the nation experience.

All of the reports in the series are available online at **www.learningforward.org/publications/canada-study.**

New report in Canada study series focuses on Alberta

BY PAMELA OSMOND-JOHNSON, KEN ZEICHNER, AND CAROL CAMPBELL

DEMOGRAPHICS AND GOVERNANCE

As Canada's fourth most populated province, Alberta is a multilingual and ethnically diverse province with a population of 4.1 million people, mostly concentrated in its cities and their surrounding suburbs.

Children can attend private or charter schools, though 97% of the province's 690,844 students are enrolled in one of the 2,388 publicly funded schools, about 9% of which identify as First Nations, Metis, or Inuit (FNMI) (Alberta Education, 2016a). Education for First Nations students living on reserves is the responsibility of the federal government.

The provincial Ministry of Education, known as Alberta Education, is responsible for developing curriculum, overseeing assessment, and setting the policy direction for education, including making provisions for the funding of public education.

Local governance is the responsibility of the 63 publicly funded school authorities (Alberta Education, 2016b). All of the about 40,000 teachers and administrators employed by school boards in Alberta are members of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), the only teacher organization in the province.

POLICY AND COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

For much of Alberta's history, the educational climate has been one of collaboration, consultation, and high regard for the teaching profession. Within this context, professional learning has been a core feature of Alberta's education system. Like most Canadian jurisdictions (Campbell et al.,

Time for reflection, discussion, and the sharing of practices was viewed as paramount to the future of professional learning.

2016, 2017), opportunities for teacher professional development in Alberta vary considerably, with a combination of district-led, school-based, and teacher-selected learning experiences.

At the district level, each district is required to submit a three-year strategic plan to Alberta Education. This plan outlines the major goals of the district and, as such, district-led professional learning typically serves to aid the district in meeting these goals. Similarly, schools must submit yearly improvement plans to the district that guide the content of school-based professional learning.

The *Teacher Growth, Supervision, and Evaluation* Policy (Alberta Education, 2015a) requires all employed teachers in the province to complete an annual growth plan that outlines learning goals and activities the teacher intends to engage in over the next year. Teachers may identify a combination of district, school-based, and self-selected learning experiences to facilitate the plan.

In many districts, access to a minimum number of paid professional development days is guaranteed through the collective bargaining process at the local level. These days are typically a combination of district-led and school-based initiatives, often provided by the Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia, established in 1997 to serve as hubs for professional development services at the local, regional, and provincial level. Some collective bargaining agreements also allow professional leaves for study purposes at a university.

Individual teachers in most ATA locals can also apply for monetary assistance to participate in conferences, workshops, seminars, or other self-selected professional development through staff development funds financed by the district. Some districts have additionally established their own professional development policies, reorganizing the school calendar to create additional time for job-embedded teacher collaboration

through early release of students or whole days where students are not attending school.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The capacity for teachers to achieve their professional growth plan goals is contingent on access to quality professional learning opportunities. From 2000 to 2014, teacher professional learning in Alberta was heavily influenced by the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI).

Aligning with the key components of effective professional learning identified in our larger studies of professional learning in Canada (Campbell et. al, 2016, 2017), at its core, AISI was a variety of government-funded, teacher-led, action-research projects aimed at improving student learning at the local level.

It was job-embedded, collaborative, engaged teachers in collecting and analyzing data, and was heavily supported with allocated time and other monitory resources. According to Shirley & McEwen (2009), it was the movement away from a conservative and traditional route of professional growth toward a "more collective understanding of peer learning" (p. 55) that made the AISI model successful.

Building on insights gained from AISI, in 2006, the ATA partnered with Alberta Education, the Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia, the Alberta School Boards Association, the College of Alberta School Superintendents, and Alberta Universities to develop the document *A Guide to Comprehensive Professional Development Planning* (Education Partners, 2006), which stresses that planning for professional learning should encompass a broad range of activities to balance the needs of the individual, the school, and the district.

To achieve this, professional development in Alberta has typically taken many forms: action research, classroom observation, mentoring, coaching, study groups, conferences, curriculum development, post-secondary courses, workshops, seminars, and collaborative learning experiences.

The ATA (2010) also developed a framework for professional development that identified three components that should be present in all professional learning opportunities:

1. **Process:** Professional development should encourage teachers to explore, reflect critically on their practice, and take risks in the planning and delivery of curriculum.
2. **Content:** Professional development should use current research highlighting effective teaching and learning strategies.
3. **Context:** Regardless of the professional development activity, a teacher's professionalism is recognized as well as his or her judgment in determining his or her needs.

After a series of budget cuts to education, funding for AISI ended in 2014, leaving individual districts and schools to build the next generation of collaborative, teacher-led professional development in Alberta without any formalized government funding support.

That being said, many of the commitments and ideas that associated with AISI live on in the current system in other ways. Exemplars of current high-quality professional learning can still be found in various locations across the province.

The ATA is also heavily involved in the provision of professional learning experiences through its international research partnerships and a host of other teacher conferences and ongoing projects, including an instructor core of exemplary classroom teachers who design and deliver workshops to teachers across the province.

While it is apparent that some forms of current professional development carry the spirit and essence of AISI, the lack of provincial-level support for job-embedded and collaborative teacher learning has limited access of such experiences for many of the province's teachers. Further, the degree to which teachers have professional autonomy to develop and meet the learning goals in their growth plans also varies across the system.

For instance, in the ATA's biannual survey of professional development chairs, from 2010 to 2014, fewer than 50% of respondents indicated that teachers enjoy a high degree of autonomy in determining their professional growth goals (ATA, 2015).

Similar results were obtained by the ATA's most recent member survey, where 30% of the over 800 respondents indicated that that they disagree (22.49%) or strongly disagree (7.65%) that their school district recognizes their need to determine their own professional growth priorities (ATA, 2016).

Likewise, almost all the teacher and principal respondents discussed the importance of teacher autonomy in choosing and leading their own learning experiences, and the consensus was that professional development of the future needed to further acknowledge the power of self-selected opportunities to impact practice.

Advocating for increased teacher autonomy, however, does not mean that participants did not see the importance of system-led professional learning. Rather, many noted that system-led and mandated forms of professional learning in many instances dominated teacher learning opportunities, arguing for a more balanced approach that allowed for additional teacher-led learning

experiences alongside system-led initiatives.

Experiences with professional development are also impacted by teacher workload, an issue that has increasingly become a hot-button topic in Alberta given the rapid pace of educational change and curriculum renewal.

In 2013, after an extended stalemate over contract negotiations, the Progressive Conservative government legislated a new contract but agreed to commission a workload study to examine the issue more thoroughly. Gathering data from over 3,300 teachers and 300 principals over 44 weeks, analysis of self-recorded day-logs revealed an average work week of 48 hours for teachers and 50 hours for principals (Alberta Education, 2015b).

For teachers, over 80% of their school day was devoted to either instructing (59%) or preparing and planning to instruct (22%). Within this context, it was no surprise that participants we spoke with noted the challenge of workload and job demands with respect to engaging in meaningful and effective professional development.

Consequently, focus group participants noted that future professional development needed to take place during regular work hours to ensure that the learning was maximized. However, job-embedded professional learning encompasses more than those learning activities that take place within the school context.

Rather, participants advocated for continued opportunities to learn together with colleagues from within and beyond their own schools. Time for reflection, discussion, and the sharing of practices was viewed as paramount to the future of professional learning. Likewise, in a recent study the ATA conducted on professional development and self-efficacy, 80% of respondents reported their best professional learning as "collaboration with colleagues" (Beauchamp et al., 2014).

CONCLUSIONS

- Some teachers continue to have access to high-quality professional learning.
- However, access and availability depends on district and school leaders' commitment to collaborative, job-embedded, teacher-led professional learning.
- Teachers have some choice of learning opportunities.
- Higher teacher workloads due to budget cuts constrain time for professional learning.
- The question for the future is how to make high-quality professional learning experiences accessible for all teachers in the province.

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ESSENTIALS

EXTENDING REACH

Reaching Further and Learning More? Evaluating Public Impact's Opportunity Culture Initiative

Public Impact, January 2018

In this working paper, Public Impact explores the impact of its Opportunity Culture initiative, which provides a suite of models aimed at extending the reach of highly effective teachers. Using administrative data from three partner school districts, it finds that students scored higher in math in a multiclassroom leadership model, in which a master teacher with demonstrated effectiveness leads and coaches a team of teachers. In reading, results are mixed but there are positive and significant learning gains for students taught by team teachers.

https://caldercenter.org/publications/reaching-further-and-learning-more-evaluating-public-impacts-opportunity-culture

SUBJECT-SPECIFIC LEARNING

Developing Great Subject Teaching: Rapid Evidence Review of Subject-Specific Continuing Professional Development in the UK

Wellcome Trust, February 2018

Teachers in England generally do less subject-specific continuing professional development than their colleagues in high-performing countries. This review describes how some schools have thrived through prioritizing subject-specific continuous professional development and highlights the role senior leaders play in this.

It also describes the challenges school leaders and teachers face in identifying and embedding high-quality continuous professional development, including financial constraints, teacher workload, the need to prioritize external accountability requirements, and the move to school-led improvement.

Addressing these issues may change the culture of low expectations surrounding continuous professional development, leading to improved teacher practice and better outcomes for students.

https://wellcome.ac.uk/sites/default/files/developing-great-subject-teaching.pdf

HIGH-QUALITY ASSESSMENTS

10 Principles for Building a High-Quality System of Assessments

Alliance for Excellent Education, 2018

High-quality, comprehensive, and timely information about what students know and can do is critical to ensuring that schools and families can prepare all students for success in school, college, careers, and life.

A high-quality system of assessments can facilitate this by providing aligned and coherent information from a variety of assessments about students' college and career readiness — maximizing efficiency while reducing duplication, in a timely and rich enough manner to inform instruction, student self-direction in learning, and accountability.

The 10 principles, endorsed by 19 organizations and experts from the field, provide a comprehensive road map for school leaders to improve current assessments and systems, focus on equity, and develop a learner's academic proficiency, career skills, and civic aptitude.

http://deeperlearning4all.org/10-principles-building-high-quality-system-assessments

CONNECTED SYSTEMS

Developing a Professional Learning System for Adults in Service of Student Learning

The Aspen Institute, February 2018

For students to become powerful learners, their teachers must engage in powerful learning themselves. Yet the professional learning many teachers experience is often disconnected from the curriculum, specific students and their learning needs, and their daily work.

What's needed is a tightly connected systems focus on continually increasing the knowledge and skills of teachers in their context, with their colleagues, as central to improving student learning. At its heart, this is an equity issue, ensuring that all students in a system have equal access to rich, high-quality learning.

The framework presented in this report attempts to make visible the coordinated, multiple parts of a system needed to support deep, effective professional learning for adults so that they can improve student learning outcomes.

www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/developing-professional-learning-system

Inform. Engage. Immerse.

FOCUS

GREAT STARTS

Principals, teacher leaders, and district staff from New Prague School District in Minnesota participate in a professional learning day. Using data collected in classroom visits and surveys, the district developed a three-year professional learning plan and a learning structure for the process.

THE VALUE OF TEACHER OWNERSHIP

"Having our reading teachers serve in a leadership capacity transformed the culture of our school. We are much more invested in becoming stronger literacy instructors and leaders as a result. Our professional development was rolled out in timely increments because we had a process to know when to introduce new learning and to build on it when teachers were ready. It was a recursive process."

— Will Remmert, principal , Eagle View Elementary, New Prague School District, Minnesota

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MIDDLE SCHOOL FLIPS THE SCRIPT

WITH INSIDE-OUT PD, PROFESSIONAL LEARNING STARTS IN THE CLASSROOM

BY NIAMH McQUILLAN

I was at a meeting with two 8th-grade language arts teachers co-planning a unit on *Macbeth*. Both Stephen St. Germain and Rafe Park were expert teachers, and the creative sparks were flying.

"There's a microcredential for questioning," I said. "Would you like to try it out?" The pair didn't hesitate. I decided to open a few more doors. "How about a lesson study on the same lesson and a Greenlight Learning Walk so other teachers can come into your classroom and see what you're doing?" They hesitated for a moment. I held my breath. After exchanging glances, they said, "Sure!"

A bubble of excitement burst in my chest. "This is working," I thought. "Inside-Out PD is working just as we hoped."

THE WHY

As a professional development and instructional coach, I think it doesn't get much better than this. I was in my third year at Windsor Mill Middle School, one of seven Lighthouse middle schools in Baltimore County Public Schools in Maryland. Windsor Mill serves 500 students in grades 6-8; 94% of students are African-American, and 73% are on free or reduced-price meals.

The previous year, the district had launched a learner-centered initiative in 10 Lighthouse elementary schools — schools that were selected to lead the districtwide transformation in teaching and learning. My task was to bring relevant professional learning to the middle school so teachers could make the shift to small-group instruction and

incorporate purposeful technology.

The pace was fast and furious. On everyone's radar were visits from other schools and districts beginning in January. Teachers and administrators were coming to see our work infusing 1:1 technology — providing a laptop for every student — in a learner-centered environment.

We used every professional development method at our disposal to prepare teachers in these practices. They honed their skills in such areas as responsive instruction, blended learning, flipped learning, customization, and personalization. The teachers threw themselves into the deep end, sharing successes and failures like candy.

By the middle of the first year, three things became obvious:

1. Technology was not the holy grail — sound instruction was still at the heart of learning.
2. Teachers were battling overload and time constraints.
3. Despite all the planning and surveys, figuring out how to provide meaningful professional development that translated to the classroom was like throwing spaghetti at the wall to see what stuck.

Photo by NIAMH McQUILLAN

Educators at Windsor Mill Middle School plan a gallery walk to highlight their year's work. From left, Joseph Bensley, Krystle Hockenbrock, Sharon Walder, Tatanisha Love, Adam Berkowitz, and Principal Harvey Chambers.

The conclusion? We needed to reconfigure what we were doing as a school.

The *why* of reorganizing our professional development model was clear. The professional development we had in place was not consistently purposeful to stick with teachers. The next step was the *what* and the *how* of change.

I had one foot in my new role as professional development coach, where I saw the big picture of what we needed to do, and one foot still firmly in the world of the classroom. My 18 years as a high school English teacher left me with a visceral feeling of what it was like to be responsible for a room full of students every day.

As a teacher, I always liked new learning, but more often than not, it was like a barnacle on my practice. I attended professional development and took the handout back to the to-do tray in my classroom with the full intention of incorporating it into a lesson that week. Without fail, something would come up and that wouldn't happen.

THE WHAT AND HOW

Our school's biggest assets were a fearless principal whose motto was "Do what it takes," rock-solid assistant principals, and an open-minded faculty. By spring, Principal Harvey Chambers and I decided on our approach: Inside-Out PD, a streamlined professional development model that held teacher practice at its core.

We had two central ideas. First,

professional development would be generated from inside the teachers' classrooms. The question was, how could we begin the inquiry in the classroom and expand from there? Our second idea aimed to tailor the dizzying myriad of district and school initiatives and requirements that teachers fielded every year.

Generate learning from the inside out

The structure for teacher learning with Inside-Out PD centered around four inquiry teams — areas identified as crucial learning for our school:

- Standards-based planning and effective feedback;
- Higher-order thinking;
- Targeted small-group instruction; and
- Project-based learning.

Teachers chose the inquiry team that matched their need and interest, with the understanding they could move to another team midyear.

We invited our teacher leader corps, a group of nine teachers, to co-facilitate the four teams, and we created a yearlong schedule that set aside the second week of the month for me to train the teacher leader corps and the fourth week of the month for the teacher leader corps to share that learning with the inquiry teams.

At the launch meeting with the teacher leader corps in September, we generated inquiry team goals grounded in the "highly effective" category of Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching (n.d.). For example, the project-based learning team identified two goals for the year: to cognitively engage students in learning activities and assignments and to demonstrate flexibility and responsiveness in the classroom.

The team would focus its work on the question: What problems do the students see in their school and community? Seventh graders would ultimately generate ideas for their American dream and then backward map the path to reaching that dream by making a school-specific and financial college plan.

At monthly meetings thereafter, the first half-hour focused on inquiry team-specific professional development and the second half-hour focused on teachers sharing classroom artifacts that they uploaded in their team's OneNote notebook. The aim was to ensure that the learning was purposeful, responsive, and directly applicable to what was happening in the teachers' classrooms.

Cut down on overload

The second aim of Inside-Out PD was to streamline the demands placed on teachers. Each year, Baltimore County Public Schools requires teachers to write one teacher development goal and two student learning outcomes: one aligned with content, the other with the school progress plan.

The inquiry team goal — for example, getting students to develop good questions and take on responsibility and ownership of discussions — could function as a teacher development goal, and the inquiry team professional development — for example, using Cornell Notes and higher-order thinking and questioning — could provide the basis for the student learning outcome, which, in this case, might be an expository essay.

This would address the teachers' responsibility to meet the school progress plan and literacy goals. The student essay could also serve as a team member's artifact for the OneNote notebook.

Administrators and department chairs could plan observations to coincide with lessons that infused the inquiry team learning. And teachers could earn microcredentials — digital badges — that matched the work they were doing in teams. They might choose to earn a badge in a variety of areas, such as choosing tech tools, learner engagement, checking for understanding, or seeking student input.

I now had a point of entry to work with each teacher that blended instruction, practice, content, and technology. Teachers were honing their skills in such offerings as Microsoft OneNote, ClassFlow, Wixie, and VoiceThread, as well as with various formative assessment tools, such as Quizlet, Kahoot!, and Socrative.

For additional support, teachers had a go-to partner. From the onset, Principal Chambers wanted to ensure that all teams had access to one another's learning. We planned a virtual professional development via TodaysMeet in October, a schoolwide learning walk in January, and an end-of-the-year real-time share in May.

YEAR ONE: TAKING STOCK

Teams met twice in early fall. When I reconvened with the teacher leader corps, I was eager to hear both the good and the bad. I asked, "So what's working?" Their answers: "The small groups." "The focused topics." "The relationships and close collaboration."

"And what's not working?" I asked. They paused and then gave two definitive answers. First, they needed a protocol for sharing artifacts, whether a sample of student work, an excerpt of a lesson plan, an assessment, or a reflection on a process.

For example, one teacher was trying out different room arrangements for targeted small-group instruction. Her artifact was a description of the pros and cons of the variety of setups she tried.

Finding the right protocol for sharing artifacts was relatively easy. The teacher leader corps did a trial run of a protocol from instructional coaching in which the coach poses questions to understand the thinking of the coachee, not to be the expert who points out

mistakes. The next month during the inquiry team meetings, teachers tried out the practice. The protocol got the thumbs-up and became part of the monthly agenda.

The second issue the teachers flagged related to professional development for teams — that it needed to be more clearly designed and delivered. This required a longer-term approach. We gathered teacher feedback on their learning needs. Over the next three months, expert resource teachers presented at inquiry team meetings on ClassFlow and Wixie.

ClassFlow allows teachers to create polls as formative assessments, organize small groups in response to the data, and use student answers in real time for peer learning. Wixie is a publishing and creativity platform akin to PowerPoint that lets students design products through their writing, voice, and art.

Both are embedded in the Baltimore County Public Schools learning management system. We also Skyped schools to share and learn about practices. Teachers delved into online resources to find models and generate new ideas.

In January, all teachers took part in learning walks. Teachers first gathered to discuss the "looks-fors" during classroom visits. As a group, we traveled to three or four classrooms for seven- to 10-minute visits, taking notes of what we observed, and then we gathered to debrief and see what teachers could bring back to their own classrooms.

Teachers saw great examples of targeted small-group instruction, station work, alternative room designs, technology tools for formative assessments, integration of OneNote into teaching practices, higher-order questioning and thinking practices, project-based learning designs, and effective feedback practices.

The end-of-year share took place in May through a team gallery walk. On the big day, each team had 15 minutes to show their collective artifacts. All of the artifacts were uploaded in a school OneNote before the gallery walk so teachers could take personalized notes for later use.

Our school's biggest assets were a fearless principal whose motto was "Do what it takes," rock-solid assistant principals, and an open-minded faculty.

YEAR TWO: FINE-TUNING

As the second semester drew to a close, Principal Chambers and I assessed where we stood with Inside-Out PD. First up was the teacher leader corps. A number of our teacher leaders were moving to other schools for leadership positions, and others were turning their focus to new leadership roles within the school.

We wanted to bring on new teacher leaders who were fully on board in terms of both the time commitment involved (two hours each month) and the buy-in (our mantra being "Yes, and," not "Yes, but").

Second, we decided to have three inquiry teams instead of four: responsive instruction; AVID (a program new to the school); and project-based learning. Third, we built in time at the beginning of the school year for inquiry teams to design their yearlong professional development.

Fourth, we introduced a more informal open-door practice for learning walks — the Greenlight Learning Walk. From December through March, teachers could post dates and times on a calendar in the front hall to let the school know that anyone was welcome to come in and see a new activity or strategy in practice, such as how a teacher was using VoiceThread videos for peer feedback or literacy strategies in math to decode and solve word problems.

I had two more goals. I had taken a district yearlong course on *The Art of Coaching Teams* (2016) by Elena Aguilar and was now teaching the same course to other teachers. I wanted to make Aguilar's ideas about trust, collaboration, team building, and emotional intelligence part of the language at Windsor Mill. I would build this culture first in the teacher leader corps, then the teacher leaders would share this knowledge in the inquiry teams.

In addition, we piloted a lesson study model as an alternative to a formal observation. It offered an opportunity for authentic learning for teachers that would directly affect students, as well as an opportunity for streamlining teacher responsibilities.

For example, the math department chair paired with a second-year math teacher for a lesson study to focus on literacy. They co-planned to use reading strategies in solving word problems patterned after Measures of Academic Progress, and they opened their doors for the first Greenlight Learning Walk of the year.

Both teachers' student learning outcomes addressed mastery of solving one-step and two-step equations for Algebra I and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments, a deficit previously noted in students' performance in both Measures of Academic Progress and PARCC.

EARLY RESULTS

In fall 2016, Windsor Mill was selected to host Digital Promise's League of Innovative Schools Conference. The feedback from

Continued on p. 32

REMOTE POSSIBILITIES

RURAL TEACHERS IN COLORADO HONE THEIR SKILLS AS THEY CONNECT WITH PEERS

BY BETH MELTON

When it comes to rural, this place is it. Spread over the vast northwest corner of Colorado, it takes over two hours (on a good day) to drive from one end of the region to the other. There's a 9,000-foot mountain pass in the middle. We get an average of 175 inches of snow each year. And one of our member districts is an area that's still officially designated as "frontier."

In 2014, we — the Northwest Colorado Board of Cooperative Educational Services (NW BOCES) — were awarded a U.S. Department of Education Investing in Innovation (i3) grant to address the challenges of providing high-quality professional development to teachers in rural schools. Those challenges include inadequate access due to remoteness, limited resources available to individual school systems, and small school sizes leading to teacher isolation. With the support of this grant funding, we're developing a System for Educator Effectiveness Development (SEED).

OUR APPROACH

I'm one of the members on the SEED team that designed this project. Our team includes coaches, a project manager, and a project director working together to answer these three questions: How might professional learning influence teacher practice? How might rural educators connect with regional peers to reduce isolation? And how might Colorado's teacher evaluation system be used as a meaningful opportunity for growth?

As with all professional learning, our ultimate goal is to improve student outcomes. We believe we can do so by:

- Using teacher evaluation data, teacher needs, and evidence-based practices to drive the content of professional learning;
- Addressing the needs of teachers by leveraging technology to engage them in professional learning opportunities;
- Embedding professional learning organically within the teacher evaluation process;
- Providing teachers options for professional learning; and
- Giving teachers the support

Lake Granby in Colorado is part of a vast region served by the Northwest Colorado Board of Cooperative Educational Services. Its remoteness presents unique challenges for professional learning.

Photo by BETH MELTON

Educators work to define student ownership in August 2017. From left, Lauren Curcio (Steamboat Springs High School), Becca Chernin (East Grand Middle School), and Chris Tinkum (Granby Elementary School).

they need to apply their learning in unique classroom settings over time.

By designing professional learning that meets these criteria, we expect that teachers' knowledge of best practices will increase, principals will become more engaged in the professional learning of those they supervise, teachers will regularly apply what they've learned in the classroom, and student engagement will increase, thus leading to improved student achievement.

KEY COMPONENTS

Our system has three key components: It leverages technology, aligns to the state teacher evaluation, and adapts Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (2011) to a multidistrict setting. Let's look at each of these in depth.

TECHNOLOGY

In our rural setting, teachers often need to travel long distances to attend high-quality professional learning. In our mountainous region, weather can make traveling difficult throughout much of the school year.

Moreover, many of our teachers hold multiple responsibilities — from coaching track, to serving on a committee, to driving the school bus — that make it difficult to collaborate with peers routinely and make it almost impossible to attend professional development after school or on the weekend. As a result, most professional learning has historically been workshops provided by third parties during the summer.

Without follow-up and support, this is one of the least effective forms of professional learning, so we're trying to change the model in our region. We've now designed professional learning that teachers can complete on their own time with minimal travel.

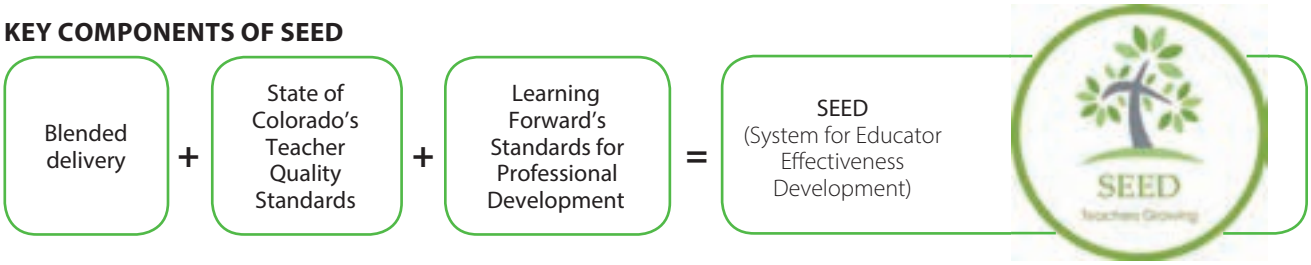
By offering a menu of technology-supported professional learning options, we've found that teachers are able to connect with their regional colleagues and learn together in meaningful ways throughout the school year. Each of the following options uses technology in a different way.

Personalized Accessible Knowledge (SEED PAK)

One of our largest undertakings has been creating an online resource library for teachers. Our team of coaches identifies resources that are evidence-based, high-quality, and relevant to teachers and aligns them to the standards in the Colorado teacher evaluation rubric.

Principals can assign various resources through the state's online evaluation system that align with goal areas in the teachers' evaluations. Teachers can also assign resources to themselves. Administrators can then monitor teachers' progress toward mastering the material and continue to have conversations with them

KEY COMPONENTS OF SEED



throughout the year. Teachers receive recertification hours after reviewing the material and answering a few questions.

This online library is a valuable resource for teachers who want to engage in professional learning on their own schedule. Although this form of professional learning is unlikely to suffice on its own to change a teacher's practice, it's important for teachers to have an option that enables them to work independently and that develops a habit of learning and reflection.

Teacher Learning Communities

The most in-depth professional learning we offer is a semester-long teacher learning community. These offerings are structured like a graduate course and enable teachers to earn continuing education graduate credits.

We run two to three teacher learning communities each semester, with anywhere from 10 to 30 participants in each.

To date, we've offered topics such as increasing student ownership of learning, developing classrooms of inquiry, thoughtful technology integration, and students as partners in creating a positive classroom environment.

The teacher learning communities use a blended learning model in which teachers meet with one another on two face-to-face days, engage in online discussions about the course content, and meet with a coach several times throughout the semester. This blended model enables our rural teachers to connect with one another while minimizing travel.

Professional Practice Study

For teachers who wanted to go into more depth than the SEED PAK could offer but who weren't able to commit to a semester-long teacher learning community, we designed a third option — a six-week professional practice study.

In this shorter course, teachers engage with one another and a coach in a six-week, one-credit course that is 100% online. We typically have 10 to 20 teachers in each professional practice study. They have three virtual meetings, two virtual coaching sessions, and online work that includes reviewing resources and participating in a discussion board.

TEACHER EVALUATION RUBRIC

In 2011, the State of Colorado created a teacher evaluation system designed to ensure that all students have effective teachers. As part of this system, a rubric was developed (Colorado Department of Education, 2017) that member districts use for teacher evaluation. When we were identifying innovative ways to provide high-quality professional development to rural teachers, we looked to the rubric as a guide. Because all teachers in the region are evaluated on the same rubric, we structured professional learning using its criteria.

In the SEED PAK, resource links are searchable based on their alignment with the rubric, and administrators can assign resources to teachers according to the practices they've identified as goals. Teacher learning communities are always aligned to one element of the rubric.

We can identify widely applicable professional development needs on the basis of regional rubric data, which include final evaluation scores from the teachers' evaluators as well as self-assessment scores.

For example, we've seen a great need in the area of formative assessment, Element IIIB on the teacher evaluation rubric: *Teachers use formal and informal methods to assess student learning, provide feedback, and use results to inform planning and instruction (focus on increasing student ownership of learning).* So we developed a teacher learning community that focuses on this practice, and we integrated the following learning targets:

- I will intentionally create an environment in which students take academic risks and demonstrate a growth mindset.
- I will engage students in practices for self-assessment that accelerate student learning.
- I will provide high-quality, academically actionable feedback to students.
- I will actively engage students in monitoring and reflecting on their learning.

Because of the small district sizes (ranging from about 200 to 2,000 students), it can be nearly impossible to create robust learning options for teachers within an individual school. Many teachers are the only one in their content area or grade level, and support resources are limited. By aligning professional learning to the state teacher

evaluation rubric, we're able to create a tool for meaningful collaborative learning across multiple districts.

STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The final component in the SEED model is use of Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011). Although the standards are written for professional learning in a single-school or single-district context, we've found that we're able to use the spirit of each standard to lead us to the best practices for professional learning. Here's how the SEED project exemplifies each standard.

Learning Designs. This standard is the primary focus of our work. We create professional learning that engages educators in constructing their own knowledge and respects them as adult learners. We view all teachers as ongoing learners and encourage teachers to embrace a growth mindset in their professional practice.

We use research on adult learning to guide our work and create professional learning that is discussion-based and appropriately paced (giving time for thinking and processing); allows teachers to create relevance to their own contexts; is embedded in daily classroom practice; and provides a high degree of autonomy to self-select learning experiences.

We give teachers authority to lead their own learning, and we draw on this authority by using teachers to develop professional learning opportunities. Each summer, we convene a content development team, and we pay a stipend to teachers to review a draft of the content developed and provide feedback to create a final product.

We recognize the inherently social nature of learning and strive to provide ample opportunity for teachers to connect with others, both virtually and face to face. We balance collaborative work with extensive personal reflection through journaling and coaching. To overcome the challenges of providing high-quality professional learning to teachers who work in a rural context, we adapt these learning designs to a technology-enhanced environment.

Learning Communities. We strive to increase the opportunities that educators have to connect, collaborate, and learn together. When multiple teachers within a school participate in SEED professional learning together, we help support and facilitate conversations that lead to a shared commitment and goal.

Educators connect with one another and work together to tackle problems of practice through online and in-person conversations. We also seek to make the SEED PAK a place where teachers can come together and connect virtually through social media tools.

Leadership. The SEED team provides leaders at the regional level by developing resources, advocating for high-quality professional learning, and creating support systems through our offerings. In addition, we work closely with building- and district-level leaders to assist in supporting professional learning in their buildings, both through whole-staff learning and more individualized opportunities as part of the teacher evaluation process.

Data. We use data from teachers' evaluations to determine topics for professional learning. Teachers in teacher learning communities use student data and student work to evaluate the effectiveness of their new practices.

We also collect input from teachers and principals based on the needs they've identified within their schools so we can create professional learning that supports their school improvement efforts. Finally, we collect data on student achievement and engagement, as well as teacher and principal perceptions of the professional learning we provide, which is formally evaluated by an external researcher annually.

Resources. By providing ongoing coaching support and resources for learning more about the professional practices in our teacher evaluation rubric, we're able to give our schools and districts opportunities for personalized professional learning. To make it easier for teachers to fit professional learning into their busy schedules, we try to create opportunities that are sensitive to the demands on a teacher's time and that offer flexibility.

Implementation. We regularly use a tool called Navigating Change (Colorado Education Initiative, 2014), which guides our thinking about helping educators navigate through changes in their practice. We provide ongoing support for teachers to improve their practice through coaching and opportunities to collaborate with regional peers.

We also focus on building administrator capacity to support teachers' growth. We have a regional principal learning community that supports principals with the challenges of their job — especially those particular to rural leadership. We work directly with principals in this setting to share strategies and tools we've found to be successful. We also partner with principals individually to identify content that might help support their building-level initiatives.

Outcomes. We believe that the teacher evaluation system can be a tool for change. However, we also recognize that it can easily become little more than a compliance measure. By aligning all SEED professional learning with the professional practices in the Colorado teacher evaluation rubric, including a direct integration of the evaluation tool with our online library and alignment of content to these professional practices,

we give teachers and administrators tools for using the evaluation cycle as an instrument for growth.

SO FAR, SO GOOD

Since receiving the grant, we've completed one year of development, a half-year pilot, and one year of full implementation, and the results are promising. Teachers who participated in our professional learning have told us that they valued the resources, the new teaching practices they learned, and the fact that they were able to immediately try out those practices in their classrooms. Others mentioned how valuable it was to connect with other educators.

After our pilot teacher learning community in spring 2016, in which 66 teachers participated, teacher and administrator surveys and interviews indicated that teachers who had participated were significantly more likely than other teachers to say:

- "PD increases my enthusiasm for teaching."
- "PD encourages me to reflect on aspects of my teaching."
- "I learn new and different ideas from my PD experiences."
- "Knowledge gained from PD improves my teaching skills."
- "PD content is up-to-date and evidence-based."

Several participants attributed their students' success on the state assessment to some of the new practices they had implemented in their classrooms. Teachers also reported increased student engagement in the learning process.

MAKING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING A PRIORITY

We're grateful for this opportunity to explore new and innovative ways to provide high-quality professional learning experiences to rural teachers, but the work is not over. We continue to refine the systems that will help ensure all students have an effective teacher in their classrooms, and we're already working on identifying how we might sustain this work after the grant funding period is over.

We think it's possible, however, because we're seeing that when teachers have the opportunity to engage in learning that influences their practice, they're hungry for more — and providing that learning becomes a priority for decision-makers, funders, and their communities.

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Middle school flips the script

Continued from p. 27

Microsoft, Dell, and superintendents from across the United States echoed the themes we hear from all who come to visit our school: They remark on the high level of student engagement with technology, teachers' effective use of technology, and the school's positive culture. Other teacher leaders regularly ask to visit our school to see how we incorporate technology in small-group instruction.

We've also seen growth in both math and reading, according to Measures of Academic Progress data. Schoolwide math scores have increased from 53% in 2015-16 to 63.9% in 2017-18, and English language arts scores have increased from 54.5% to 58.4%.

THE WORK IN ACTION

"I'll gather the resources for the microcredential on questioning," I said at the end of the meeting with St. Germain and Park. Both teachers were in the AVID inquiry team, and higher-order questioning was part of their everyday tool kit. They would weave questioning and critical thinking into their lessons with beauty and ease.

I couldn't wait to invite other teachers in for a Greenlight Learning Walk to see the work in action exactly where it should be happening — in the classroom with each and every student.

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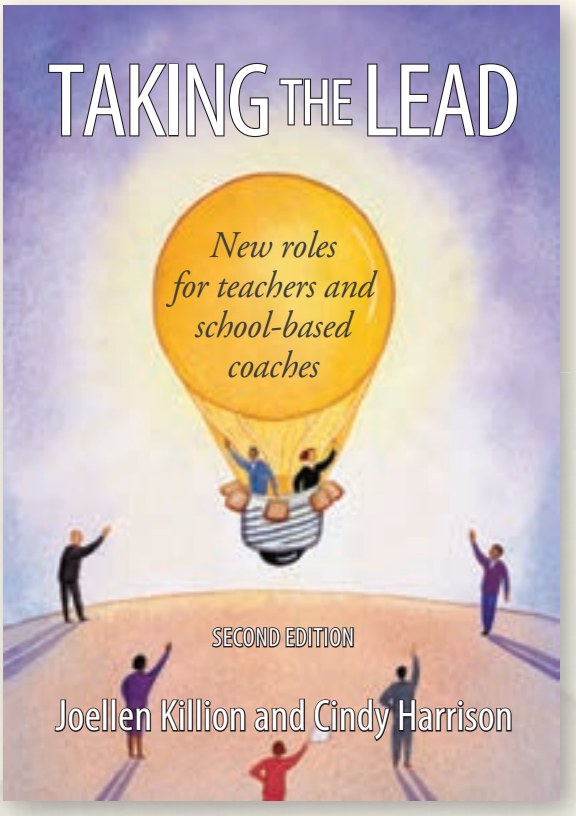

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MATH MAKEOVER

A SCHOOL-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP TRANSFORMS ELEMENTARY MATH INSTRUCTION

BY NICOLE RIGELMAN, SARAH CRANE, KELLIE PETRICK, AND DONNA SHRIER

Walk into Jackson Elementary School in Hillsboro, Oregon, on any school day, and you'll notice the excitement in the air. You'll encounter students enthused by the mathematics lesson they just had, along with teachers excited about the collaboration they just completed.

Teachers at Jackson embrace a growth mindset and continuously try best practices that better reach all students. They collaborate and bounce ideas off one another, and they observe one another and provide feedback. They'll even ask another teacher to model lessons with their students so they learn how to implement particular instructional practices.

The energy is contagious. As Sarah Crane, Jackson's principal, reflected, "It's uncommon for me to walk through the halls without someone telling me about a lesson they did, one they're going to do and want me to watch, or one they just watched a colleague do with students. Walking into classrooms and seeing the authentic, productive student discourse or listening to a student explain the lesson is truly an administrator's dream."

Collaboration between Portland State University and Hillsboro School District personnel helped create this instructional environment where students thrive because teachers are working and learning together.

During Crane's first year as principal at the K-6 school, teachers worked together to develop this mission

Photo by NICOLE RIGELMAN

Teachers at Jackson Elementary School in Hillsboro, Oregon, discuss potential next steps for students and implications for their math instruction. A partnership between the school and Portland State University supports learning that focuses on examining instructional practice with teacher candidate and cooperating teacher teams in the area of math instruction.

statement: *At Jackson, we are a family community that embraces a tradition of excellence that fosters emotional, social, and academic growth in a culture where everyone is happy, welcomed, included, and challenged.*

So when the district mathematics specialist and a university mathematics education faculty member approached Crane with the idea to collaborate, she agreed immediately. She knew that the collaboration would be good for all teachers, as well as for the teacher candidates hosted at the school, and that using lesson study — one of the proposed approaches — would spur such collaborative practice to continue. Ultimately, it seemed like the perfect step toward realizing the school mission.

Jackson Elementary School
Hillsboro, Oregon
Enrollment: 560
Staff: 25
Racial/ethnic mix:
- **White:** 66%
- **Hispanic:** 14%
- **Multiracial:** 9%
- **Asian:** 7%
- **Black/African-American:** 3%
- **American Indian/Alaska Native:** 1%

Limited English proficient: 8%
Free/reduced lunch: 23%
Special education: 13%
Website: www.hsd.k12.or.us/Jackson

THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

School and university leaders agree that developing a shared vision and collaborative practices in school-university partnerships leads to mutually beneficial experiences for all involved (Petti, 2013; Rigelman & Ruben, 2012; Teitel, 2003).

This present partnership extended the long-term relationship fostered between Portland State University's Graduate Teacher Education Program and Jackson Elementary in Oregon's Hillsboro School District. Jackson has long hosted large groups of teacher candidates working alongside cooperating teachers who are willing to open their classroom practice in ways that benefit learning for the candidates, the teachers, and the students they serve.

The school was eager to expand the partnership to include opportunities for the teacher candidate and cooperating teacher teams to learn together through book studies and modified lesson studies, which would be co-facilitated by a project leadership team on which we, the four coauthors, served: Sarah Crane, school principal; Kellie Petrick, district mathematics specialist; Donna Shrier, university supervisor; and Nicole Rigelman, mathematics teacher educator. The collaborative work provided learning opportunities for both teacher teams and project leaders.

We leveraged the existing school-based professional learning community

(PLC) structures to support learning that would focus on examining instructional practice with teacher candidate and cooperating teacher teams, specifically in the area of elementary mathematics.

We selected mathematics as a focus because performance on the Smarter Balanced Mathematics Assessment was flat in its first two years of implementation. Because of the long-term partnership between the mathematics specialist and the teacher educator and our previous similar work in Title I schools, we were interested in extending our professional development model to include teacher candidate learning and practice.

We used protocols and tools — such as the Task Analysis Guide (Stein, Smith, Henningsen, & Silver, 2009); the Bring•Do•Leave Instructional Planning Guide (Rigelman, 2011); and the Student Discourse Observation Tool (Weaver, Dick, & Rigelman, 2005) — that focused the collaborative planning and teaching cycles at both the classroom and PLC levels.

The quarterly cycles included four phases: preplanning, collaborative planning, co-teaching/focused observing, and debriefing based on student data (Rigelman, 2017; Rigelman & Ruben, 2012), much like a Japanese lesson study cycle (Fernández, 2005; Watanabe, 2002). Our work differed in that the focus was not on tuning a lesson, but rather on tuning practice.

The PLC also engaged in monthly book studies and examination of student work. This benefitted the 16-member cross-grade PLC, and, more specifically, the five teacher candidate and cooperating teacher teams by helping all develop a shared vision for mathematics teaching and learning that focused on eliciting and using student thinking and discourse to deepen student learning and inform instruction (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2014).

We used problem-based lessons as a vehicle to promote student thinking and reasoning. These included tasks where students were not expected to solve in one particular way.

For example, we posed the following problem stem: *Bobby had 38 toy cars. Mia had 53 toy cars.* The first stages of eliciting student thinking came in making sense of what the task might be about and brainstorming potential questions students could ask and answer, given this information. After students selected a question to answer and developed a solution strategy, selected students shared their approach with the whole group. The teacher candidate and cooperating teacher team asked students questions and recorded their thinking on chart paper for later reference when comparing strategies.

This common vision deepened participants' capacity for co-teaching and surfaced enthusiasm for what students may say or do with various mathematics tasks. The district mathematics specialist and school principal noted the benefit of teachers focusing on continuous improvement of their instructional practice, as well as the side benefit of replicating this model both in other subject areas in the school and in other schools in the district. The university faculty benefitted from continued study and improvement of ways to develop mutually beneficial partnerships in schools.

WHOLE-SCHOOL LEARNING: THE PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE

Crane, the principal, knew this collaboration had potential to be powerful, given her previous experience with lesson study, but she also noticed two unanticipated outcomes.

First, she had the chance to be a learner with her teachers. Although teachers may have been nervous in the first PLC meeting about speaking openly with their principal present, that quickly faded as they realized she was there to learn and grow — and not to evaluate. Even the teacher candidates, who understandably started out shy and quiet, grew to a point where they were leading lessons while all 16 PLC members watched.

A second unexpected outcome was connected to the time spent dissecting student work and student talk in ways that the PLCs had not done before. Teachers now had a common language and a continuum for student mathematical discourse — from procedures and facts, to justification, to generalization. They used this tool to plan, analyze, and extend the student discourse. "We saw the power of these practices," Crane said. "I don't think any of us will ever teach without wanting another set of eyes in the room at times to really capture what the students are saying and doing."

The collaborative lesson study experiences also produced a lot of buzz among the staff. Other teachers wanted to know what we were doing and how they could join in. Although we kept the group closed to honor the process we had been through together, we began to share lessons and collaborate with other teacher teams in the building.

For example, when teachers finished a schoolwide day of instructional walk-throughs, they asked how the teachers in the collaboration had fostered such authentic discourse in their students. They observed that students in these classrooms were talking more about the math they were doing and that teachers and students were building on one another's ideas during whole-group discussions. Basically, those teachers wanted to have what the collaborating teachers were having.

When the principal talked to the teachers about the work, they immediately signed up for an onsite university mathematics course

that would give them background knowledge and learning aligned with the work in this collaboration.

How to sustain the work? "Next year, we will not benefit from the grant funding and collaboration to the extent we did this year," Crane said. "However, we have planted seeds in the building that will not only remain, but also continue to grow and flourish. My job now is to help continue the process by encouraging teachers and teacher candidates to collaborate, find covered time for lesson study and instructional rounds, and maintain my own excitement about student and teacher growth."

DISTRICTWIDE LEARNING:

THE MATHEMATICS SPECIALIST'S PERSPECTIVE

The most productive use of a district mathematics specialist's time is within schools, working directly with teachers and students. Even more productive is a partnership among school staff, the school administrator, university faculty, and our next generation of teachers on behalf of Jackson's K-6 students. Through this school-university partnership, we identified four additional benefits.

First, within months, there was noticeable instructional accountability among the teacher candidates, cooperating teachers, and the mathematics specialist. The teacher candidate and cooperating teacher teams exchanged frequent emails, photographs, references to specific pages from the book study, and video footage as a means to celebrate student growth, as well as to initiate brainstorming toward potential next steps.

Second, the mathematics specialist and school principal collaborated to sustain and propel this learning culture beyond the participating grade-level teams. They scheduled schoolwide professional learning — for example, on how to implement problem-based lessons and how to deepen mathematical discourse with connections to the district's instructional framework — both to minimize initiative fatigue and generate broader enthusiasm for the work.

Third, this move also positioned partnership teachers and teacher candidates as leaders, given their experience with student-focused instructional practices, as they planned and delivered lessons. Through this deprivatization of practice, all participants, including the mathematics specialist, deepened their knowledge and ability to elicit and use students' mathematical understanding and consider its development over time.

Last, the partnership fostered broader interest in professional development. As Kellie Petrick, the mathematics specialist, noted, "The presence of risk-taking created a lasting impact on the district's mathematics work as it propelled others, both in and out of this project, to get involved in related district professional development opportunities. Most notably, teachers at Jackson Elementary enrolled in a Portland State University course from the elementary mathematics specialization program."

Similarly, all the teacher candidates attended district mathematics professional development sessions alongside their cooperating teachers. A willingness to learn together was an extension of the meaningful collaboration present in this partnership.

TEACHER CANDIDATE LEARNING:

THE UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR'S PERSPECTIVE

It's typical for teacher candidates to start the student teaching year feeling somewhat overwhelmed. So it wasn't surprising that the five teacher candidates involved in the partnership initially expressed some trepidation about how they would have time to complete the required readings, attend extra meetings, and collaborate on lesson planning.

However, those feelings quickly subsided for one candidate who co-planned a lesson study lesson with her cooperating teacher, the principal, and the district mathematics specialist. After the initial planning session, she said: "I was able to see what it was like to collaborate with others who held different roles. My feelings moved from worry about extra work to appreciation for the opportunity to learn."

The collaboration later extended to all the teacher candidates as each planned and delivered number talk lessons. Planning was a frequent focus of their conversations. One candidate said that she was beginning to take more ownership with teaching and that she felt more like a teacher than a teacher candidate. As the year progressed, the candidates commented on how comfortable they were with sharing thoughts with teachers from other grade levels and with the principal. They felt they were a part of the community of teacher learners.

There were many other ways in which the teacher candidates experienced growth as a result of their involvement in these mathematics-focused PLCs. Compared to the typical teacher candidate, they seemed more comfortable planning and teaching mathematics lessons. Their lesson planning included thinking through common misconceptions concerning the topic at hand and considering how to support student discourse throughout the lesson.

A focus on student thinking was central to their goals. They regularly invited the university supervisor to observe their mathematics lessons. As the year progressed, candidates were able to make connections between

what they were learning about teaching mathematics and apply it to other subjects.

For example, during one literature study group that the university supervisor observed, the teacher candidate leading the session asked mostly factual or one-answer questions. During the debrief, the supervisor compared the learning about high-level mathematical discourse to the potential discourse for book discussions. The connection was clear to the candidate, who then began to notice that higher-level questioning and discussions fit in with literature study and science lessons, just like in mathematics.

Another candidate mentioned that she did not envision discourse as a model to get students to think deeper until she saw this carry over to community circle time, where students practiced the skills they had learned in mathematics — using wait time, listening to others explain their thinking, solving problems together, and having open discussions, including agreeing to disagree.

Although teamwork and collaboration are emphasized in the teacher education program, few candidates have the opportunity to experience them in their student teaching settings to this extent. To be a respected member of a team working alongside experienced teachers while all learn together is powerful and an experience that will serve them well throughout their teaching careers.

SUSTAINING THE WORK

This partnership has generated enthusiasm throughout the school, and teachers report great impact on student mathematics learning. There is an authentic desire to continue collaboration within and across the school's PLCs and to empower teams through the use of lesson study.

According to Petrick, the mathematics specialist, "Colleagues are clamoring to get involved and hope this type of work continues in their grade levels next year." To promote continuous teacher learning and student-centered mathematics instruction, the specialist is leveraging this experience across the district by using lesson study with teacher teams across schools and elevating the participating teachers as models for others to observe to learn more about deepening student discourse.

This work becomes sustainable when school structures and university structures align to achieve a common vision for student learning and focus on ways to support learning for all members of the partnership. In this case, school structures included teacher collaborative time and a focus on particular instructional approaches and curriculum areas for improvement; university structures included the availability and expectations of teacher candidates, as well as a clearly defined role for a university supervisor.

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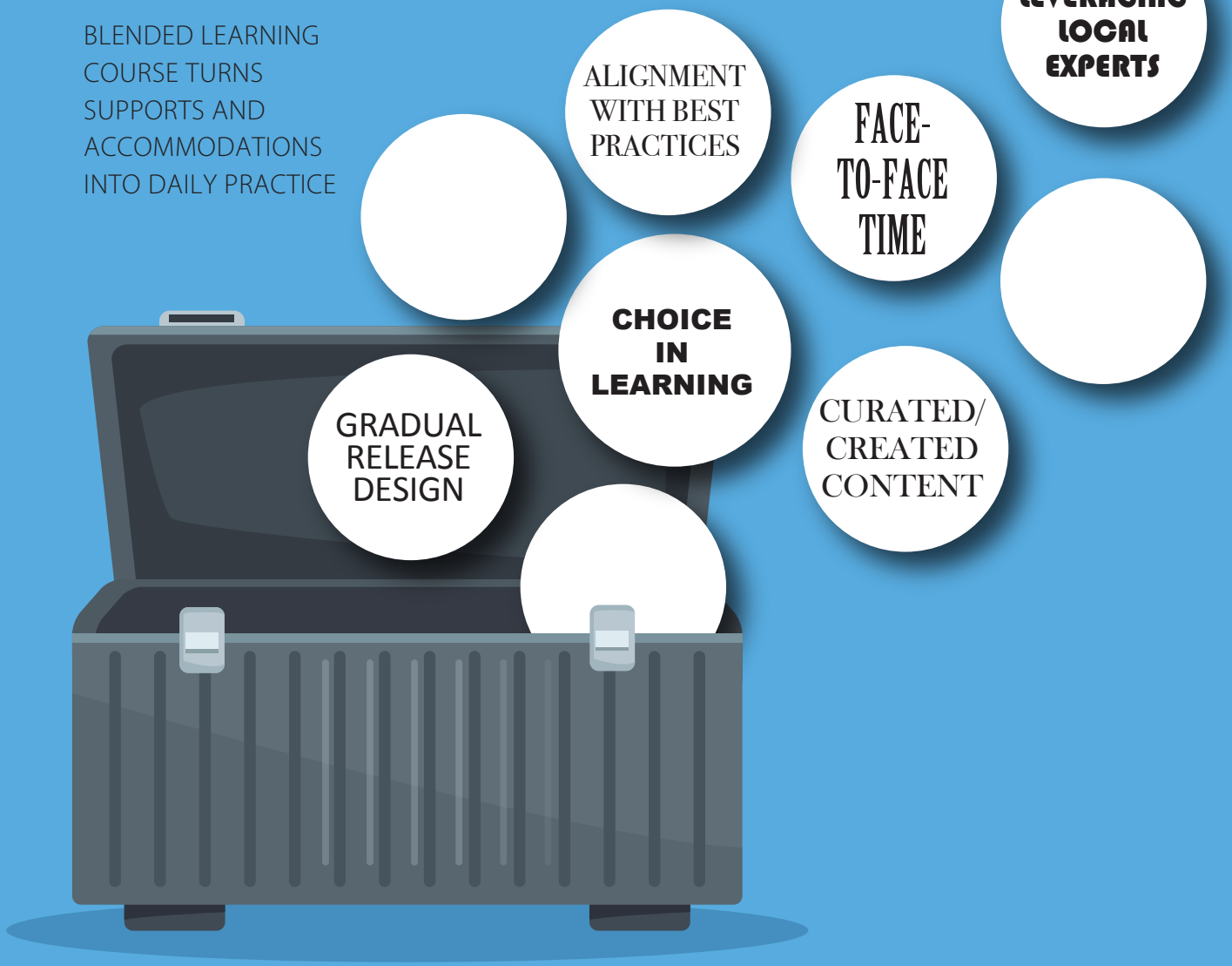

BY KELLY BIKLE

A two-day standardized testing workshop might seem an odd place to find inspiration for building an innovative professional learning model, but that's where our story begins.

As professional learning director in California's Palo Alto Unified School District, I attended a California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress Institute (CAASPP) workshop with a district team composed of our assessment coordinator, a special education inclusion specialist, and several teachers.

Our goal was to learn about the Smarter Balanced test, as well as strategies and best practices for using CAASPP to improve teaching and learning. These ideas led to the creation of our blended professional learning course, Supports for All Students.

THE OBJECTIVE

Workshop facilitators emphasized that testing supports and accommodations were not meant just for testing days and that they shouldn't be a surprise or a new strategy or tool, but a common practice that students use with success in the classroom.

This shift in philosophy — specifically, that our state's standardized test should be connected to the teaching and learning that happen in the classroom every day — was one we wanted our teachers to learn about. We knew that the only way to support teachers' understanding of this shift was to help them build a toolbox consisting of a range of supports and accommodations, as well as strategies they could use in real time and with real impact on the students they puzzled over each day.

Meanwhile, we had been experimenting with using Schoology, a learning management system, as a platform for professional learning. We could have used a workshop format, but we wanted to increase teachers' comfort level with and use of the system. At the same time, we wanted teachers to experience the power of blended learning experiences.

We thought we could boost teacher willingness to use the learning management system and encourage them to experiment with new ways of using technology with their students if we provided them the opportunity to experience its power at the student level.

We built our course to contain the foundational knowledge and skills we wanted participants to learn. These included understanding the differences among supports, accommodations, and modifications for learning in the classroom; the different terminology for student supports, such as Response to Intervention, Universal Design for Learning, differentiation, and co-teaching; the philosophy of California's assessment system and accessibility supports and connections to instructional design; and an array of possible supports and tools for use in the classroom.

We helped teachers build a toolbox of a range of supports and strategies they could use in real time.

As teachers worked their way through the various modules, the course would provide structure, space, and incentives for teachers to share learning, problem solve together, and receive feedback from the course facilitator.

WHY BLENDED LEARNING?

The majority of our professional learning is still based on a workshop model. Although they've gotten a bad name, workshops are not passé (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). In fact, we believe that online professional learning experiences are enriched by some degree of face-to-face meeting time. Paired with coaching, workshops can provide high-quality learning opportunities.

Blended professional learning opportunities offer teachers an added

approach. They expand teachers' options; provide more choice; and honor how, when, and with which resources teachers learn best (Stacker & Horn, 2012). Most important, this model moves away from a reliance on time- or seat-based models of professional learning to focus on competency-based models instead.

The International Association for K-12 Online Learning has developed a set of competencies for blended learning teachers (Powell, Rabbitt, & Kennedy, 2014). For example, competencies focus on such topics as shifting to student-centered learning, using a learning management system to manage the blended learning environment, and using technology creatively and purposefully.

Not only does the work provide a useful lens for examining professional learning, it also suggests new ways of personalizing learning for teachers and students alike.

REVIEWING THE LANDSCAPE

As a frequent Massive Open Online Course dropout and Digital Badge fan club member, I had been collecting examples of how various course designers had conceptualized the path through blended and online professional learning.

To begin, we convened a team consisting of content experts with backgrounds in special education and assessment as well as a course designer. Our design team began by reviewing models from Stanford University's Understanding Language Project (http://ell.stanford.edu); the Friday Institute (www.fi.ncsu.edu); and Digital Promise (digitalpromise.org). Here's what we learned.

Massive Open Online Courses

The formative assessment course developed by the Understanding Language Project at Stanford University featured short doses of course content followed by both an assignment for teachers to gather data or implement strategies and a peer review process.

We appreciated the reliance on the professional community for discussion and feedback. In the smaller cohorts we'd be working with, in addition to peer review, we wanted to ensure we were tapping the expertise of our facilitators in reviewing and providing feedback on participant work. We also wanted to focus on a gradual release model, where the participant began the course by building shared knowledge, then moved to support innovation and ownership in implementation.

Digital Badges

In particular, we looked at work done by Digital Promise and the Friday Institute. To earn a badge, participants must meet identified outcomes as measured against a rubric by submitting written responses and artifacts from their teaching practice.

Participants can earn badges for a wide variety of competencies, such as exploring wait time or disaggregating data (Digital Promise) or executive functioning or using number lines (Friday Institute). We liked that badging provided freedom and flexibility for how to learn the content. Participants could navigate multiple resources to use those that best met their learning needs.

The badging models we explored asked teachers to submit their work to a panel for review and were often asynchronous, which afforded opportunities for expert feedback and flexibility in pace and completion time. However, that also meant that the design couldn't accommodate the discussion and peer review we valued in the Massive Open Online Courses.

SETTING PRIORITIES

We then identified the following design priorities that we felt would not only help participants build foundational knowledge of the content and engage in a community of practice, but also support implementation, data gathering, and reflection.

COMPETENCY MODEL

All assignments and discussion are graded on a rubric aligned to the learning outcomes of the module. Participants need to demonstrate understanding of the differences between accommodations and modifications and, over the course of the modules, demonstrate an understanding of how to partner with students to identify appropriate accommodations and design them into the lessons.

Although discussion occurs among participants and participants engage in peer review, a paid facilitator also engages in discussion and is responsible for providing feedback and review against the rubric. Therefore, participants are submitting not only to the facilitator (as in a badging model), but also to their community (as in a Massive Open Online Course model).

GRADUAL RELEASE DESIGN

There are three modules in the course. As participants work through them, they take on increasing responsibility for guiding their own learning and applying what they learn to their teaching context.

In Module 1, participants learn about the purposes for accommodations and supports and the differences and similarities among Universal Design for Learning, Response to Intervention, differentiated instruction, 504 plans, and Individualized Education Plans.

In Module 2, participants complete a class profile to explore the makeup of their class. They then identify a student who puzzles them and take a deep dive into that student's learning profile,

HOW THE BLENDED LEARNING COURSE ALIGNS WITH LEARNING FORWARD'S STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Learning Forward standard	Supports for All Students Blended Professional Learning Course
Learning Communities	• The course focuses on building a professional network among participants. • Participants move through the modules on a set timeline, with a rubric supporting thoughtful conversation along the way.
Leadership	• Local experts attest to the importance of building teacher capacity in this area. • Future facilitators are identified from course participants.
Resources	• Resources on inclusion can be shared easily and widely. • This course is an additional resource.
Data	• This is an effective way to share data on inclusion practices. • The course addresses the district's priority on addressing achievement gaps.
Learning Designs	• Peers support one another across space and time as they work to solve problems of practice together. • Integrating application, implementation, reflection, and the face-to-face meeting is the most powerful feature of the course.
Implementation	• Integrating implementation as part of the design supports teachers in addressing their students' needs.
Outcomes	• Participants submit their lessons, supports, and reflections throughout the course. These data will enable us to examine the impact of our work with specific students.

personal interests, and experiences with school.

Participants interview their focal student to gain an understanding of the student's perception of his or her own strengths and needs, then they look together at possible accommodations to try. One main goal in this assignment is to support teachers to connect what they have learned in Module 1 to the needs they identify with a particular student.

In Module 3, teachers design supports into their lessons, implement lessons, gather and analyze data, reflect, adjust, and repeat. Teacher outcomes and reflection comprise the closing module of the learning experience.

CHOICE IN LEARNING

One of our takeaways from reviewing the Digital Badge model was the idea of providing choice in the resources available to teachers. In our design, we balanced information we expected everyone to know with resources that would meet participants' particular needs, given the classes they were teaching.

CURATED/CREATED CONTENT

Although designing and curating our own content take time and thought, they also afford an opportunity to select content that connects to ongoing initiatives and resonates with district culture. We reviewed videos, activities, and articles freely available online and selected resources we felt would resonate with teachers and align to our goals. Where necessary, we created our own content, screencasts, quizzes, assignments, and documents. This enabled us to present material in a way that allowed us to connect the dots for our context.

LEVERAGING LOCAL EXPERTS

Many in our group worked as instructional coaches supporting students with learning and behavior needs, and they were feeling stretched thin. They saw this course as a way to reach more teachers with the content, open coaching opportunities, and build networks of support.

FACE-TO-FACE TIME

Although the majority of participant interaction occurred online, participants did attend one face-to-face meeting. The meetings were important to us, not only to build community and connection, but also to bring people together for in-person problem-solving conversations.

ALIGNMENT WITH BEST PRACTICES

We used both California's Professional Learning Standards (California Department of Education, 2017) and Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning as a lens to examine our work. (See table above.)

That conversation resulted in the design priorities, as well as a list of questions to examine after completing the work. In particular, we were concerned about the role of expertise in the course. We decided to

position the facilitator as summarizer and cheerleader, but also have that facilitator attend to misconceptions and knowledge gaps.

We also wondered about support. Although the online course is convenient in terms of time and space, that community doesn't entirely replace in-person conversations. A few participants decided not to continue due to the workload, and we wondered whether additional in-person support might encourage completion.

OUTCOMES

To date, we have run the course twice, once as a small pilot and once as a larger group. In total, 27 participants have completed the course. When asked for feedback, the majority of participants responded favorably, noting the flexibility in content and pace as well as the opportunity to interact with teachers across the district without having to stay after work.

As a result of taking the course, participants identified goals and next steps for their own teaching. They found the modules useful in growing their knowledge and skill to meet a wide range of student needs. As one teacher noted, "The most useful activities were developing a student profile and implementing an accommodation with that student. These activities forced me to think specifically about my student's needs, and I was able to see immediate results from the accommodation I tried."

LESSONS LEARNED

Here are three lessons we've learned.

The need to address the challenges of scaling

Using our learning management system has been beneficial because we can enroll a large number of participants and easily replicate the course many times. Moreover, relying on the community of practice helps coaches and facilitators reach more people because peers provide some of the support.

At the same time, this course is time-intensive. We'll need to consider how to support facilitators in focusing their attention on the most crucial aspects of the course so the work remains sustainable.

The need to provide ongoing support

In this course, we offer tools for identifying students in need of additional supports, supply information about where to find ideas for supports, and provide opportunities for teachers to implement their ideas and reflect on how well those choices met a student's needs. We know that having done this once in the context of a class with facilitator and peer support won't be sufficient for long-term change. But it's a good start.

Our next step is to grow our community of learners through enrolling additional cohorts, leveraging our coaches to provide ongoing support, and creating new courses or groups to support ongoing learning.

The need to clarify the design model

Some participants found they spent much more time in the course than we had planned. We're tackling this challenge in two ways. First, we're reviewing course content to identify where we might streamline or add additional materials. Second, we're planning to add an overview to the introductory module so participants more clearly understand the design concept of the course. People are not expected to explore every resource, but should use the expected outcomes and rubric to decide what they need to do to meet the expectations.

NEXT STEPS

Two important next steps can move us forward. First, we would like to streamline the course development process so we can scale our program and add new content with minimal course design changes. Second, we need to build a support system for facilitators and course designers to ensure they have the knowledge, background, and skills to meet our expectations for building and running courses. We need to include content focused on blended teaching, online facilitation skills, and learning management system skills.

This is new landscape for all of us. Professional learning providers have an opportunity to model risk-taking, use of best practices, and agility in supporting a wide range of educator learning needs — in the same way we want educators to approach education for their students.

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At Falcon Ridge Elementary School in Minnesota, teachers engage in professional learning focused on improving literacy in the New Prague School District. Johna Anderson, reading specialist at Falcon Ridge, sees evidence of transformation: "We've seen changes in the ways that teachers set up rituals and routines in their classrooms."

CONNECT THE HEART AND HANDS OF LITERACY

LINK CURRICULUM RENEWAL TO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR A SOLID IMPROVEMENT PLAN

BY SANDI NOVAK AND BONNIE HOUCK

Imagine you're a visitor entering a school for the first time. How would you know that reading is a priority here? What would you see and hear as you moved throughout the school? What are teachers and students doing in classrooms? How are students interacting with their teachers and peers? What resources are being used? Is evidence of student learning posted on classroom walls or in the hallways?

The answers to these questions reveal the belief systems and values that educators and school leaders have about reading instruction and student learning. Studying these elements can be instrumental in developing an aligned system of professional learning and collaboration that has the power to change the literacy culture of a school and district.

CURRICULUM AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

According to Alvior (2014), curriculum is the "heart" of any educational organization. Realizing its importance, many school districts engage in a curriculum renewal cycle. Doing this well can be a crucial factor in students' academic success (Steiner, 2017).

New Prague School District in Minnesota is finding success by linking a systematic professional learning process to the curriculum renewal cycle.

During a typical cycle, the district identifies an area of study, at which point district and school personnel dive deep into reviewing curriculum, studying research-based practices, and analyzing student data related to the subject. In districts that value reflective practice and continuous improvement as "the hands" that guide and implement learning, educators also study current instructional practices and overall culture of learning in classrooms. Effective schools will assess all areas of strength and need before purchasing resources or providing professional development.

New Prague School District in Minnesota is finding success by linking a systematic professional learning process to the curriculum renewal cycle. As teachers implement the curriculum, they're reaping the benefits of a well-designed, carefully implemented plan for professional development and resource allocation.

WHAT THE DATA SHOWED

A few years ago, New Prague involved teachers from each grade level in three elementary schools to review literacy standards and develop common assessments to monitor reading progress. With the curriculum articulated, the leaders were ready to determine resource and professional learning needs.

Guided by the two coauthors who served as literacy consultants throughout the process, the leaders began by conducting two rounds of literacy classroom visits (Houck & Novak, 2016) in all classrooms in the district. Literacy classroom visits are

walk-throughs in which observers look for evidence of research-supported practices that have a direct effect on literacy achievement. Teachers also completed a survey of their understanding and use of best practices in reading.

Looking at these data, school leaders found many strengths, as well as two crucial areas of need: Classroom libraries were not positioned to support the reading needs of students, and instructional planning lacked intentional focus and delivery.

REVAMPING CLASSROOM LIBRARIES

Classroom libraries are core resources in fostering motivation, interest, and opportunities for students to practice reading skills and strategies necessary for comprehension development. Most of the district's classroom libraries not only needed new resources to ensure a balance of fiction and informational texts that students would like to read, but also needed to be organized to support student self-selection.

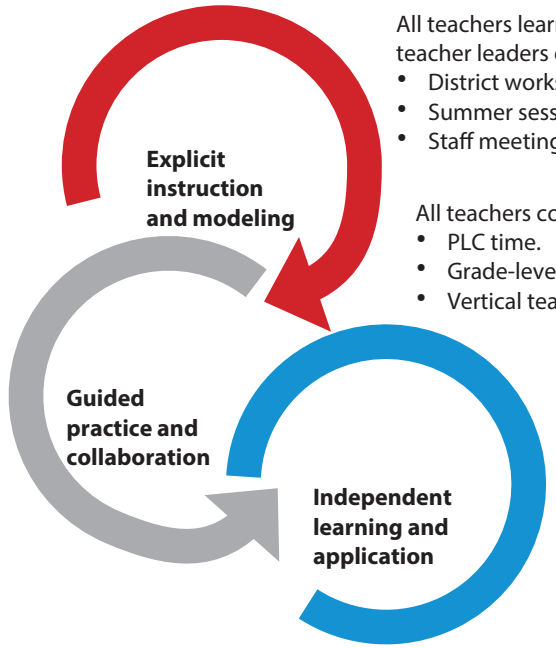
The district addressed this fairly quickly, with both district and parent advisory committees allocating money in spring 2017 for new materials. In addition, teachers used a self-assessment tool to inspire ideas about how to reorganize their libraries. To deepen their knowledge about the contents of an effective library, teachers would also be offered professional learning over the summer. Broader and more intensive professional learning would be implemented during the school year — and that will be the focus of the remainder of this article.

PROMOTING INSTRUCTIONAL CLARITY

Knowing the standards is the first step to instructional clarity, but teachers also need to unpack standards into lesson-size goals, or learning targets, to scaffold student progress toward mastery. Learning targets (Moss, Brookhart, & Long, 2011) are statements written in student-friendly language that convey the lesson's performance criteria in terms that students can understand. New Prague leaders learned from their literacy classroom visit data that learning targets weren't being explicitly taught and monitored across whole-group, small-group, and independent reading, despite the professional learning on the subject teachers had experienced in the past.

FRAMEWORK FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Coaching (Literacy consultants)	Resource support	Teacher support



All teachers learn content from consultants or teacher leaders during:
- District workshops.
- Summer sessions.
- Staff meetings.

All teachers collaborate during:
- PLC time.
- Grade-level meetings.
- Vertical team meetings.

All teachers learn independently and apply learning:
- Learn more from book studies and additional reading.
- Apply learning in their classrooms.

Literacy classroom visits	Enhanced literacy classroom visit instruments to monitor progress	Teacher feedback/ surveys

Source: Adapted from Houck & Novak, 2016, p. 80.

STARTING WITH A PLAN

School leaders used their data analysis to craft a three-year professional learning plan that specified the details — timeline, resources, topics, and facilitators — for the first year of the plan, which focused on independent reading and applying the learning target in whole and small groups. Teachers also engaged in professional learning on conferring with students while they read independently.

With assistance from the literacy consultants, principals and teacher leaders developed a learning structure for the process. The Framework for Professional Learning (see above) aligns the Gradual Release of Responsibility model (Fisher & Frey, 2013) with the Literacy Classroom Visit model — and shifts the ownership of new learning to teachers.

Here's how that framework played out in New Prague:

- Teachers and administrators districtwide participated in full-

day, half-day, and 90-minute workshops and summer sessions on focused instruction.

- Teacher leaders extended that content learning with 45-minute meetings that replaced regular staff meetings at the three elementary schools. Consultants prepared teacher leaders to facilitate the professional learning. This train-the-trainer model provided consistency within the district and helped alleviate the burden placed on school personnel to create and lead professional learning.
- Teacher leaders provided guided practice and facilitated collaboration within professional learning community (PLC) meetings at the school level. PLC meeting topics linked directly to the professional learning.

"We're being very deliberate in building a foundation of knowledge while being farsighted about the direction we want to go in the years to come."

— Dave Giesen, principal, Falcon Ridge Elementary School

- Teachers put their learning into action in their classrooms.

An ongoing series of literacy classroom visits benchmarked and monitored the implementation of new learning.

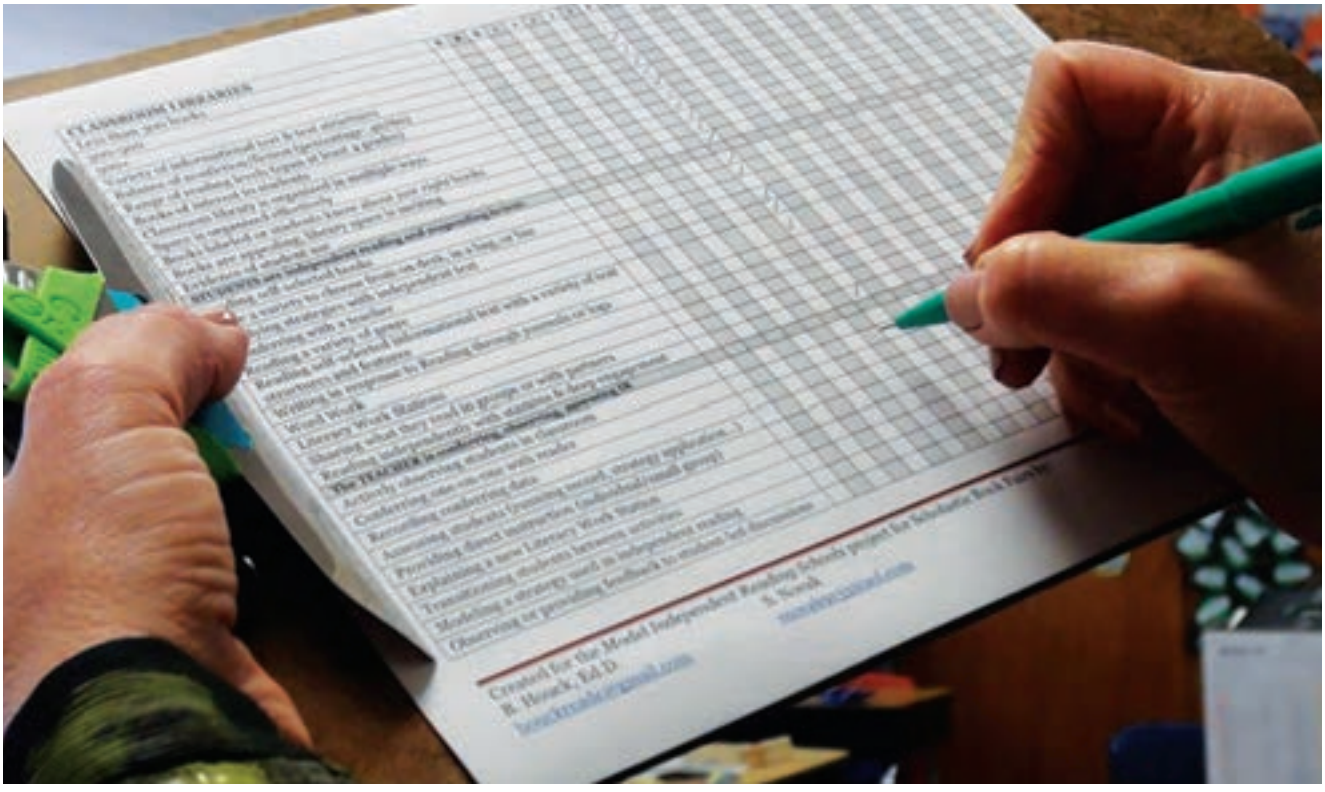
Pat Pribyl, principal of Raven Stream Elementary School, notes the importance of the three-year timeline. "This sent a message to teachers that we are committed and that we realize it takes time to grow a culture of literacy and develop readers," he says.

Falcon Ridge Elementary School Principal Dave Giesen appreciates how systematic and focused the initiative is: "We're being very deliberate in building a foundation of knowledge while being farsighted about the direction we want to go in the years to come. This intention has brought about a sense of comfort in the direction we're going."

A CLOSER LOOK

Each quarter, school leaders gather to learn from consultants about the upcoming professional learning they'll deliver in each of their schools. For example, in January, two teacher leaders from each of the three elementary schools and their principals participated in a full day of professional learning with consultants on the topics of conferring during independent reading and using a system to take anecdotal notes.

They reviewed the three 40-minute professional learning segments they



At New Prague School District in Minnesota, a teacher leader uses a literacy classroom visit instrument as part of the district's professional learning plan. An ongoing series of literacy classroom visits benchmarked and monitored the implementation of new learning.

would be providing to their schools between January and April. They also had time to practice gathering data in two classrooms using the Enhanced Literacy Classroom Visit Instrument for Independent Reading.

Armed with supportive materials, training, and practice, teacher leaders and principals returned to their schools with their new learning and professional learning resources. Because the first round of training focused on using feedback while conferring with a student, teachers were asked to explain the process they used with a particular student, how they could tell that the student learned how to apply the strategy they had provided feedback on, what they learned about individual students as a result, and how their note-taking system worked for both them and their students.

After the teachers participated in training and had time to apply their new learning, leaders conducted classroom visits using the Enhanced Literacy Classroom Visit Instrument for Independent Reading to determine how well teachers were implementing the practices.

INCREASING TEACHER OWNERSHIP

Including teacher leaders in the process had a positive effect. Will Remmert, principal of Eagle View Elementary, says, "Having our reading teachers serve in a leadership capacity transformed the culture of our school. We are much more invested in becoming stronger literacy instructors and leaders as a result. Our professional development was rolled out in timely increments because we had a process to know when to introduce new learning and to build on it when teachers were ready. It was a recursive process."

Maren Bahler, director of curriculum and assessment, notes the value of having everyone in the building take ownership. "Our principals have spent a lot of time growing as literacy leaders through our administrative professional development training," Bahler says. "And our interventionists have been diligent about providing professional development to their teachers on a regular basis, while providing on-the-spot support. Throughout the year, our teachers are getting small doses of literacy professional development, with time to implement in between the training sessions. Everyone involved can continually reflect on and adapt instruction as needed."

The commitment to creating a districtwide culture of literacy that values reading and learning is paying off.

OUTCOMES FOR STUDENT LEARNING

The commitment to creating a districtwide culture of literacy that values reading and learning is paying off. Principal Pribyl explains this growth in his school: "When the question was asked a year ago, 'What informs a visitor when they enter your building that this school values literacy?', I couldn't answer that question. Now I'm pleased to say that we're well on our way to demonstrating that we're a school of readers."

Summing up the transformation in teaching and learning, Johna Anderson, reading specialist at Falcon Ridge, notes: "We've seen changes in the ways that teachers set up rituals and routines in their classrooms. Students are independently reading for a minimum of 30 minutes daily in K-5 classrooms, and book talks are taking place among students and the staff. We've built a culture of literacy that's apparent as soon as you enter our school."

The three-year plan is still in progress, but already, when visitors enter the New Prague Schools, they see the value placed on literacy. There are more examples of student work posted in hallways and in classrooms, learning targets with clear performance criteria are posted in all classrooms, students are reading and talking about books, the classroom libraries are larger and more organized, and more students can articulate the specific learning targets they're working on to improve their reading. Most of all, the school is now abuzz with self-directed and motivated readers.

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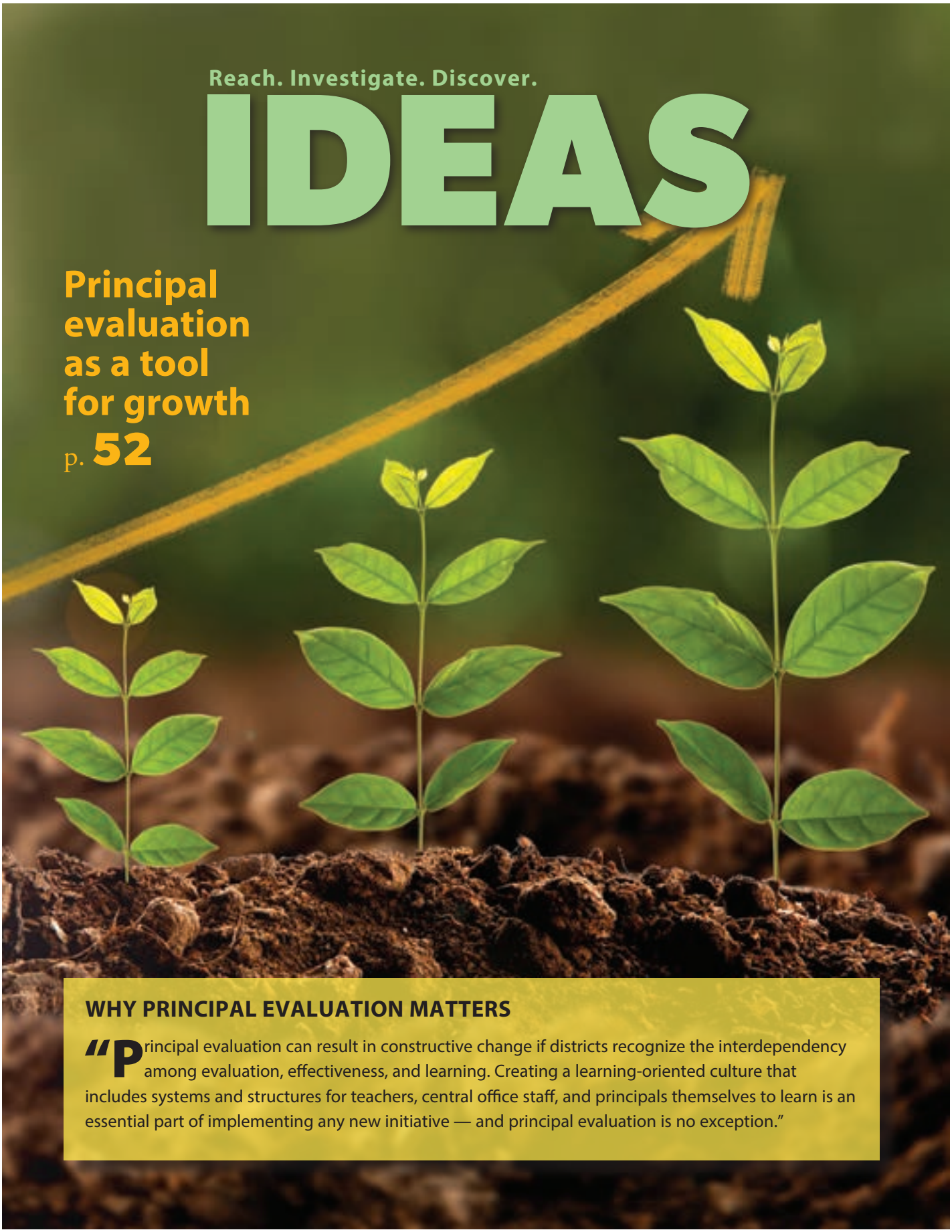
Reach. Investigate. Discover.

IDEAS

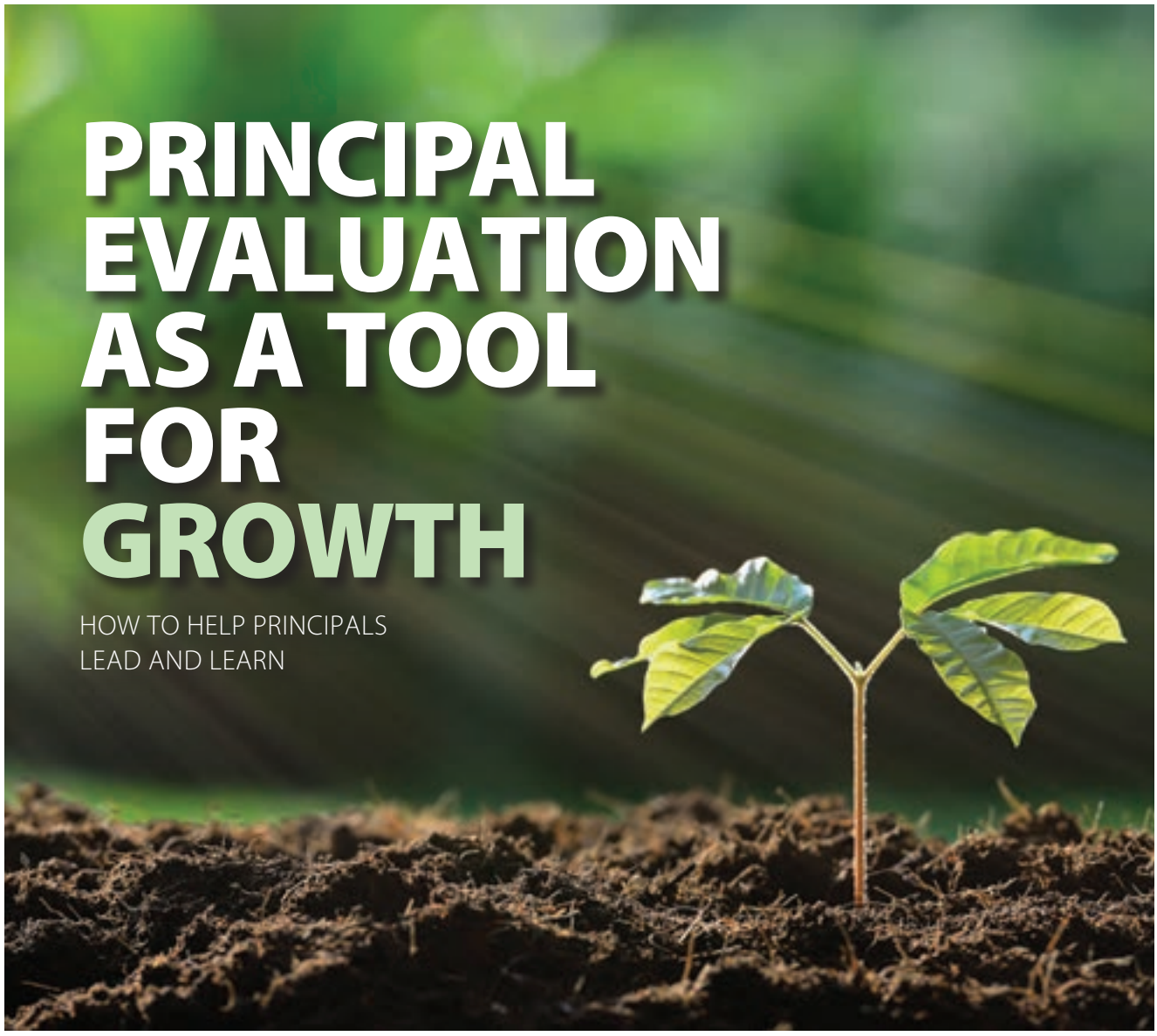
Principal evaluation as a tool for growth

p. 52



WHY PRINCIPAL EVALUATION MATTERS

"Principal evaluation can result in constructive change if districts recognize the interdependency among evaluation, effectiveness, and learning. Creating a learning-oriented culture that includes systems and structures for teachers, central office staff, and principals themselves to learn is an essential part of implementing any new initiative — and principal evaluation is no exception."



PRINCIPAL EVALUATION AS A TOOL FOR GROWTH

HOW TO HELP PRINCIPALS LEAD AND LEARN

BY DONNA J. MICHEAUX AND JENNIFER L. PARVIN

How can we use principal evaluation as a tool for growth? We grappled with this question as we worked with principals and principal supervisors who were implementing new principal evaluation systems across the United States.

As we progressed, one thing became clear: Principal evaluation systems without explicit and aligned professional learning simply re-create a system of compliance and fail to improve leadership capacity.

Although there have been concerted efforts at the national, state, and local levels to develop more comprehensive and rigorous principal evaluation systems, few address the huge investment in learning that is needed to improve practice. Given the complexity of the role of today's principals, they must learn a new set of skills and knowledge to create innovative learning environments.

The intent of most principal evaluation systems is to both evaluate

and build leadership capacity. The Wallace Foundation has produced several reports (Anderson & Turnbull, 2016; Corcoran et al., 2013) targeting strategies to strengthen school leaders. For example, in North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District, principal supervisors meet with principals throughout the year to discuss their growth, assess progress, and establish professional development goals. In Florida's Hillsborough County Public Schools, principal supervisors are spending more time in schools and "are much more intentional about their work, collecting a lot more evidence and doing a lot of coaching with the principals" (Mendels, 2017, p. 55).

Nevertheless, despite research that shows that evaluation alone does not lead to improved leadership effectiveness, few principal evaluation systems include explicit professional learning opportunities for principals, such as how to coach teachers to build their instructional practice, how to conduct effective classroom observations and provide quality feedback, or how to create a shared vison and build an effective team.

Those charged with evaluating principals — principal supervisors — are typically, although not always, former principals who have been successful in moving a campus in a positive direction. However, the skills that enabled them to be successful as principals are not always commensurate with their job of leading the development of a diverse set of leaders across multiple schools.

To use principal evaluation as a tool for growth, they must be able to coach and give powerful feedback, develop and deliver adult learning, facilitate group learning processes, and cultivate a culture of transparency and continuous learning.

THE DISTRICT AS DRIVER OF IMPROVEMENT

The Wallace Foundation believes that principal evaluation, when used to both evaluate and improve practice, can be a powerful lever not only for developing school leaders, but also for improving student achievement (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

Principals and principal supervisors are uniquely situated to lead this effort. To succeed, however, these leaders must loosen their grip on the technical elements of their job, which they tend to do extremely well, and embrace the adaptive aspects of the work. Unlike technical problems, these require new ways of thinking, learning, and doing (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009).

For example, in addition to discussing the technical aspects of a given academic intervention (such as when to hold tutoring sessions or what assessments to use to identify students in need of intervention), principals must also address the adaptive challenges involved (such as how to deliver engaging instruction that reaches diverse learners or how to target interventions in terms of standards).

But the district itself must first be willing to engage in adaptive change. Failure to do so will result in futile attempts to layer transformative leadership practices onto an existing system that is focused on compliance and management. Districts must create the conditions that will allow principals to develop and grow. By functioning as a learning organization, districts can help create a learning culture in their schools and use principal evaluation to improve principal practice.

Just as "children grow into the intellectual life of those around them," writes Russian psychologist and child development expert Lev Vygotsky (1978, p. 88), we believe that adults also must be "enculturated" (Ritchhart, 2015) into a system that learns. Indeed, if we are to succeed in creating cultures of thinking and learning for young people, we must also create a rich intellectual life for adults in the system.

We often begin our work with district staff by asking the following question: What is the quality of

intellectual life in your district? The reaction and responses are revealing. Most are startled by the question. Pushed to reflect, they often admit that it's not as robust, rigorous, and aligned to leadership standards and expectations as it needs to be to improve leadership capacity.

Principal evaluation can result in constructive change if districts recognize the interdependency among evaluation, effectiveness, and learning. Creating a learning-oriented culture that includes systems and structures for teachers, central office staff, and principals themselves to learn is an essential part of implementing any new initiative — and principal evaluation is no exception.

How, then, can principal evaluations become a tool for change and continuous learning? How might they promote districtwide revitalization and sustainability, instead of merely serving as a tool for managing processes? How can districts — and, especially, principal supervisors — leverage principal evaluation to improve leadership capacity?

STRATEGIES FOR PRINCIPAL EVALUATION

Through our work in districts, we have identified a set of strategies that will enable districts to use principal evaluation to help principals learn their way into effectiveness.

1. **Ensure role clarity and leadership expectations for principals.**

Principal evaluation systems must clarify the role of the principal, describe day-to-day leadership practices, and identify key principal leadership tasks that lead to deep and substantive improvements in teaching and learning. Such key tasks might include setting a vision for high-quality teaching and learning, creating systems for using data to inform instruction, routinely observing classroom instruction, giving powerful feedback, or developing teacher leaders. Principal evaluation systems should also provide a road map that guides principals to address adaptive cultural changes and leadership behaviors instead of focusing on technical issues that are necessary but not sufficient. These elements will deepen the school's or system's capacity to function as a learning organization (Senge, 1990).

2. **Transform the role of supervisors of principals to teachers of principals.**

Principal supervisors must be able to balance and align the work of evaluation with the charge to build, coach, and teach principals to improve their practice. They must become instructional leaders who help principals prioritize problems of practice and identify high-leverage tasks. As teachers of leaders, they must be able to teach, model, coach, and provide specific actionable feedback to principals to improve their practice.

3. **Provide targeted, differentiated learning supports.**

Principal evaluation systems should include the same standards for novice principals as for more experienced ones, but with different rating weights based on experience. Principal supervisors should know each principal as a leader and learner and provide differentiated support to individual principals based on their experience and need.

4. **Employ tools that provide frequent, specific, and actionable coaching and feedback.**

Districts should develop and employ a coherent, aligned set of tools and protocols to support improved leadership practice. The tools should be public, well understood, and used regularly and with fidelity to improve principal leadership practice.

Such tools might include classroom observation protocols, learning walks, feedback and coaching models, discussion and inquiry protocols, checklists for effective meetings, processes for raising the emotional intelligence of a team, or tools that use data to inform instruction.

Principal evaluation systems become more robust when they include structured goal setting; reflection sessions based on a rubric of effective leadership practices tied to national, state, or district leadership standards; and regular review of artifacts and evidence of practice related to a principal's goals.

5. **Provide structure for principals to become members of communities of practice.**

Principals must be members of strong and effective communities of practice, both formal and informal, that are focused on learning, networking, and problem solving. These communities should focus on sharpening the leadership expectations identified in the standards. They should also serve as safe havens for shared learning and as incubators for innovation. Finally, they should provide feedback to the district and inform district policies and practices to support leader effectiveness.

6. **Ensure the district functions as a learning organization.**

Districts must be intentional about developing and sustaining rigorous learning for adults within the system. They must put human development at the center of the work, just as cutting-edge for-profit organizations have done. As Kegan and Lahey (2016) note, "deliberately developmental organizations" engage in radical transparency about learning and have ongoing systems for coaching and feedback, as well as processes for

effective conversations and meetings.

Districts must also embrace their adult learners' deliberate movement between the performance zone and the learning zone. As Eduardo Briceño (2017) explains, the performance zone is about executing and maximizing immediate performance, whereas the learning zone is about improving and targeting future performance.

Principals and principal supervisors should designate certain times as learning zone times, where principals are in improving mode and mistakes are accepted as part of the learning process. These designated times to experiment encourage transparency for everyone about their role as learners, and they build a learning culture.

7. Recruit, select, and train principals to function as leaders of learning.

Districts' recruiting and hiring processes should identify principals who embrace the demands of the new principalship. Candidates should not only be skilled at responding to issues they will face daily, but also be adept at creating, anticipating, innovating, and leading change in their schools. Further, candidates should demonstrate skills aligned to principal leadership standards (Anderson & Turnbull, 2016). Once hired, these principals should be trained to be both learning leaders and leaders of learners.

FROM WHAT TO HOW

Although developing new principal evaluation systems is necessary, it's not sufficient. Any new system requires a strong emphasis on building leadership capacity by providing learning supports. The principal supervisor is the key driver for ensuring principal evaluations harness all their potential power.

Districts simply cannot afford to implement new principal evaluation systems without attending to the policies, structures, and strategies needed to develop effective leaders. One approach, as Richard Elmore (Costante, 2010) suggests, is to shift from external to internal accountability. According to Michael Fullan (Thiers, 2017), this focus on internal accountability happens "when the group, individually and collectively, has a sense of responsibility about their work."

The principal supervisor is the key driver for ensuring principal evaluations harness all their potential power.

Moving from the *what* of the principal evaluation to the *how* of learning and growth is, in fact, a shift in focus from external to internal accountability. The role of the district as a learning organization, continually changing and adapting to support new initiatives and efforts that target improved principal practice, is key to the success of this new lever for building greater leadership effectiveness.

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A BETTER BLEND

STRUCTURE AND STRATEGY INCREASE CO-TEACHING'S IMPACT IN AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

BY WILLIAM C. HUNTER, JENNIFER HOLBROOK, LISA A. DIEKER, AND ADRIAN CHRISTOPHER-ALLEN

In co-teaching, typically a general education teacher and a special education teacher pair up to provide instruction in an inclusive classroom setting. Several co-teaching models are available. Some call on a co-teacher to simply observe or assist, whereas others more fully involve both co-teachers in providing instruction. Despite having various models to choose among, teachers typically use the one teach/one assist model because they either lack planning time or lack experience in more complex models like team teaching (Rosas & Campbell, 2010).

However, given the opportunity to plan together, co-teachers not only become more equal partners in providing instruction, they can also more effectively incorporate a variety of evidence-based practices in their inclusive classrooms (Hunter, Jasper, & Williamson, 2014). And in this work, coaching can help.

To that end, we engaged seven math co-teaching teams (grades 7 and 8) in a rural Midsouthern school district in professional development and virtual coaching. The district enrolls more than 2,500 students, 75% of whom receive free or reduced-price lunch. Our work focused on building the capacity of co-teachers to plan and implement team teaching in an evidence-based practice called Numbered Heads Together (Hunter & Haydon, 2013; Haydon, Maheady, & Hunter, 2010). We selected this strategy because it

increases student engagement, provides an incentive for students to master content, and becomes most effective when implemented using a team-teaching approach.

NUMBERED HEADS TOGETHER

Numbered Heads Together is a cooperative learning strategy that attempts to provide more equitable response opportunities to all students — especially those who don't typically raise their hands to answer.

Students are clustered into groups of three or four, with each student in a group assigned a number. Teachers pose questions to the groups, and students use a dry erase board and marker to indicate their team's answers.

When the teacher calls out, "Numbered heads together," it's a signal for all groups to discuss possible solutions to the question. After a minute or two, teachers call on students with a given number to stand up and give their team's response.

The power of the approach is that it increases the number of opportunities to respond (Hunter, Dieker, & Whitney, 2016). Teachers pose more questions during the activity compared to traditional instruction, providing more opportunities for students to respond within their small groups.

Research suggests that teachers should offer a minimum of four to six opportunities to respond per minute. Students should be able to answer with 80% accuracy when learning a new skill (Reinke, Herman, & Stormont, 2013). During a co-teaching Numbered Heads Together activity, teachers pose a minimum of 10 questions, and, depending on student response, they may ask additional questions to check for understanding.

Providing multiple opportunities to respond increases both student engagement and accurate responses (Lambert, Cartledge, Heward, & Lo, 2006). Moreover, when both co-teachers have the opportunity to question students and elicit answers, they acquire parity in the classroom.

WHAT A CO-TAUGHT LESSON LOOKS LIKE

To implement Numbered Heads Together with the co-teaching model, teachers first need to use data to make decisions regarding grouping so that at least one below-average, one average, and one above-average student are in a group. They also need to dedicate time to creating guiding questions.

Each co-teacher poses five questions to students. The general education teacher might pose even-numbered questions, whereas the special education teacher might pose odd-numbered questions. It's important to note that when one teacher is in the front of the room asking questions, the other teacher is observing student groups and gathering data on individual student participation.

Let's look at a lesson on rational numbers. After dividing students into groups of four, the co-teachers might begin by asking students to give examples of opposites. Real-world examples might include earning and spending money, stock market gains and losses, or gaining and losing yards in a football game.

The general education teacher could show a video of a football game, with players gaining and losing yards. The special education teacher could highlight the learning targets, such as, "I can use a number line to show the sum and difference of integers" and "I can describe real-world situations using the sum and difference of integers."

In the course of the lesson, the co-teachers model how to add and subtract integers to solve word problems,

CO-TEACHER ROLES IN A MATH ACTIVITY — NUMBERED HEADS TOGETHER

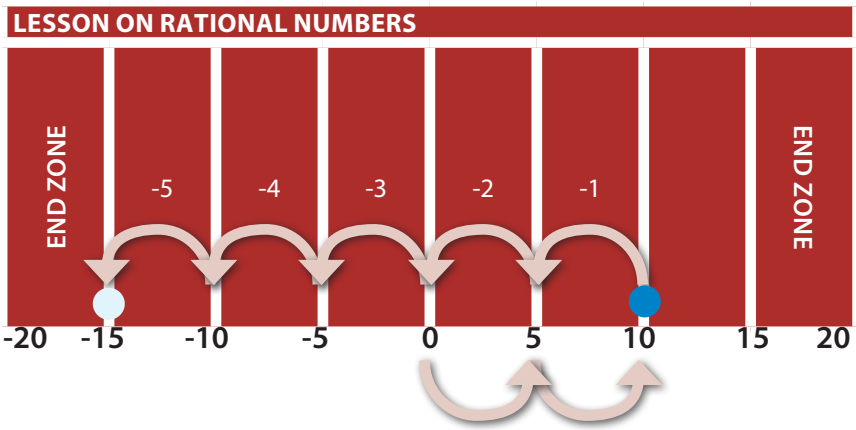
1 BOTH CO-TEACHERS		2 GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHER	3 SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER	4 SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER
During co-planning, **both co-teachers** place students in heterogeneous groups consisting of at least one high-achieving, one average-achieving, and one low- achieving student. For the activity, students are seated in groups of three to four to promote team collaboration.		The **general education teacher** distributes dry erase boards and markers to each group.	The **special education teacher** assigns each student a number (from 1 to 4) and explains students' roles when their number is called.	The **special education teacher** discusses rules of the activity: • One person talks at a time. • Respect everyone's answers. • Use "indoor voices" when talking. • Remain quiet when the teacher speaks. • Quietly return to your seat.

explain the Numbered Heads Together strategy to students, pose their 10 questions, solicit answers, and confirm understanding through using exit slips. The figure above and on p. 59 describes each teacher's role as she co-teaches a math activity using this approach.

The Numbered Heads Together strategy also enables co-teachers to engage in task analysis. They observe students grappling with problems, see how students perform their tasks, and note the degree to which they succeed (Dieker & Rodriquez, 2013).

For example, during whole-group direct instruction right before the Numbered Heads Together activity, co-teaching teams can present a math problem that requires multiple procedural steps for students to answer with accuracy. Later, during the Numbered Heads Together activity, students use task analysis — that is, their knowledge of the correct steps — to answer a similar multistep problem within their small groups.

Although there are multiple ways to find answers for complex mathematic algorithms, using task analysis provides an opportunity for students to learn one correct way (Rivera & Baker, 2013).



Task analysis enables teachers to more easily monitor students' progress and identify areas where they struggle to complete a skill (Cihak, Alberto, Taber-Doughty, & Gama, 2006). It also promotes rich discourse and gives students a chance to find errors in one another's work (Hunter, 2012).

Within the small groups, one selected student completes a math problem on a dry erase board while other students within the group provide feedback on the accuracy of each procedural step. Students must agree on the answer before presenting their solution to the co-teaching team.

In the lesson on rational numbers, the teachers might offer the following problem, displaying the graphic above.

A football player runs 10 yards. The referee throws a penalty flag, and the team loses 15 yards. How many yards did the football player gain or lose?

a. 10 yards gained
b. 5 yards gained
c. 5 yards lost
d. 0 yards

Before the lesson, the co-teachers

5 BOTH CO-TEACHERS	6 ONE CO-TEACHER	7 ONE CO-TEACHER	8 ONE CO-TEACHER	
Both co-teachers present five questions each to the student teams. Each co-teacher rolls a dice to determine which student from the teams will answer the question.	**One co-teacher** informs teams of the time they will have to answer the math questions (e.g. one minute) and instructs them to "put their heads together" to come up with an answer.	**One co-teacher** continues to ask questions until 10 questions have been asked and answered.	**One co-teacher** confirms correct answers. This concludes the activity (about 30 minutes total).	

break down the problem into multiple steps. In this case, the steps might look like this:

The student locates the starting point "0" on the number line.

The student locates the first known number in the equation, "10." Because "10" is a positive number (gained yardage), the student moves a marker to the right of zero on the graphic until he or she reaches "10."

The student locates the second known number in the equation, "-15." Because "-15" is a negative number (yards lost), he or she starts at "10" and moves left to reach "-15."

The student counts the number of times he or she moved to the left, from "+10" to "-15."

The student circles the correct answer, "c."

The co-teaching team can display the graphic of the math problem — in this case, the football field — on an electronic whiteboard or a dry erase board. Students should also have a copy of the graphic for their own reference while working within their groups to answer questions posed by the co-teaching team.

Ultimately, the goal is for the student groups to work out the problems together, agree on an answer, present their answer on the dry erase board, and receive feedback from the co-teaching team.

As teachers pose questions and students work their way through the problem, the teachers probe student responses at each step. They might use the symbol "+" for independent correct, "0" for no response, "-" for error, "V" for verbal prompt, or "M" for model prompt to indicate how well the student has grasped the material (Rivera & Baker, 2013).

If they see a student struggling with a given step, they may either engage the student in a discussion about the problem or model how to accurately complete the step. Ultimately, the goal is for the student groups to work out the problems together, agree on an answer, present their answer on the dry erase board, and receive feedback from the co-teaching team.

To ensure that students who operate above grade level aren't dominating the discussion within their group, teachers can either coach the above-average student outside of the activity in how to be a good facilitator or reorganize the groups.

COACHING FOR SUCCESS

Now all of this sounds well and good, but to do this effectively requires adequate planning time and targeted coaching support. We addressed these concerns first by offering the seven middle school co-teaching teams two hours of professional development focused on co-planning and on the Numbered Heads Together model.

The co-teaching teams developed an agenda that clarified the math content for the lesson, as well as how they would

address student strengths and needs and assess student outcomes. We provided feedback on each team's agenda and lesson plan. We also observed as the co-teachers taught the lesson using their new team-teaching skills.

Before taking part in this professional development, the co-teachers had engaged in the one teach/one assist model, with the general education teacher teaching the lesson and the special education teacher assisting. We were eager to see how successful they might be with their new team-teaching skills.

We looked at on-task behavior, which we defined as students engaging with the educational material and with the instructors and working on math problems with table mates (Hunter & Haydon, 2013). We also looked at opportunities to respond. As teachers asked questions, students answered through hand-raising and response cards.

The co-teachers were able to double the opportunities to respond during their team-taught lesson. And observational data showed that students were over 95% on-task during the team-teaching lesson, compared to being 83% on-task in the teach/assist lesson.

After the teams completed the Numbered Heads Together activity, we met with each team virtually in a brief Skype coaching session. The co-teaching teams reflected on their experience using the lesson plan, and we provided feedback based on our observation of the lesson.

STRUCTURE AND STRATEGY

A common theme we hear about co-teaching is the lack of co-planning time (Davis, Dieker, Pearl, & Kirkpatrick, 2012). However, time may not be the primary issue. Co-teachers may simply need more structure as they co-plan a lesson. They may also require a strategy, such as Numbered Heads Together, that gives them greater parity in the classroom.

The bottom line is this: Blending the two different skill sets of the general education teacher and the special education teacher with direct coaching or with a strategy like Numbered Heads Together results in a better outcome for both teachers and students in inclusive co-taught math classes.

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Discuss. Collaborate. Facilitate.

TOOLS

LAUNCH AN ANALYSIS OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Tool 1: Recommended membership of professional learning initiative analysis team, p. 63

Tool 2: Professional learning initiative analysis team matrix. p. 64

Tool 3: Professional learning initiative analysis team charge statement, pp. 65-66

LAUNCH
AN ANALYSIS OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Three facts are at work in almost every state and school system.

- Resources are limited.
- Major changes are underway that affect teaching and learning.
- Professional learning is essential for continuous improvement.

Regular and rigorous analysis of professional learning, guided with tools and recommended processes that are based on data, gives education decision-makers essential information for continuous improvement of the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of professional learning.

Launching the analysis process includes identifying the team of individuals who will oversee and conduct the analysis as well as organizing the work, timeline, and support needed to accomplish the review.

The following tools can assist this process.

TOOL 1: RECOMMENDED MEMBERSHIP OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING INITIATIVE ANALYSIS TEAM

Use the lists below to assist you in identifying representative members of your professional learning initiative analysis team.

LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM	
District administrative team	
Local school board	
School system central office staff who lead, facilitate, provide, oversee, monitor, or support professional learning	
Local teacher and principal/supervisor associations	
Teachers at multiple levels and disciplines	
Principals from schools with diverse locations, size, and student demographics	
Support or classified staff with diverse responsibilities	
Institutions of higher education in partnership with the school system	
Regional education agency	
Third-party providers who currently provide services to the district	
EDUCATION AGENCY	
Department of education executive staff	
Department of education departments governed by professional learning policies and those providing professional learning	
Local school systems: • Superintendents from districts that differ in location, student demographics, and size; • Central office from different roles; • Principals from schools at all levels, size, and locations; • Teachers from multiple disciplines and levels, teacher leaders with diverse responsibilities, resource staff with diverse responsibilities	
State teacher and principal/supervisor associations	
Support staff with diverse responsibilities from within the department of education and regional and local education agencies	
Regional education agencies	
Professional associations within the state	
Institutions of higher education	
Third-party providers within the state	

TOOL 2: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING INITIATIVE ANALYSIS TEAM MATRIX

Use this matrix to cross-reference recommended members for the professional learning initiative analysis team. Adapt the criteria across the top row to align with the purpose and goals of the initiative analysis process.

NAME	Role in school/ system	Role in professional learning initiative				Professional learning provider		Role external to school or system		Other
		Director/ manager	Principal or teacher leader	Teacher / non-instructional staff	Support staff	Internal	External	Policymaker/ decision-maker	Stakeholder	

TOOL 3: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING INITIATIVE ANALYSIS TEAM CHARGE STATEMENT

SAMPLE CHARGE STATEMENTS	
1	PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES **The reason the group is forming; what the group is to accomplish.**
	Examples: • To align professional learning with high-priority needs. • To ensure effectiveness, efficiency and equity in professional learning. • To improve accountability for professional learning. • To study what other schools and districts have done to craft time for job-embedded professional learning.
2	LEVEL OF AUTHORITY **The extent to which the group can make and/or implement decisions without others' approval.**
	Examples: • The team has the authority to act only with the prior approval of the superintendent or school board. • The team will offer to the district leadership team recommendations that have been reviewed by stakeholder groups and revised based on input. • The team has the authority to make a recommendation to the district leadership team.
3	COMMUNICATION **Who needs to be kept informed, in what form, and how often.**
	Examples: • The team collects input and feedback from stakeholders (teachers, school administrators, central office staff, vendors, professional associations that provide professional learning, etc.). • The team provides monthly updates at staff meetings. • The team publishes its agenda and minutes.
4	TIME REQUIREMENT **Expectations for amount of meeting time.**
	Examples: • The team will present its revised and final recommendations by May 1. • The team will meet at least monthly between October and April.

TOOL 3, CONTINUED: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING INITIATIVE ANALYSIS TEAM CHARGE STATEMENT

SAMPLE CHARGE STATEMENTS	
5	RESOURCES AVAILABLE **Amount of money, time, and materials for the group to use with or without prior approval.**
	Examples: • Each team member receives released time from his/her position to serve. • Internet access, printing costs, and meeting refreshments are provided from the professional learning budget. • The team will have secretarial support as needed for creating monthly updates, recommendations, and compiling stakeholder feedback.
6	MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS **Who needs to participate, how membership in groups will be decided.**
	Examples: • Members will include participants in professional learning, professional learning program directors and managers, professional learning providers, and teachers and school and district leaders. • Representatives will be included from each grade level or department. • Parent representatives will be included. • Students will be included (when appropriate).
7	ACCOUNTABILITY/EXPECTATIONS **Results, impact, accomplishments.**
	Examples: • Team's recommendations will include which of the existing professional learning initiatives align with the district's top-level priorities. • Team recommendations will address how to repurpose resources allocated to professional learning to meet all identified needs for full implementation of Common Core standards. • Team recommendations will include analysis of the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of the professional learning initiatives. • The team will make a report to the school board that includes recommendations, rationale, feedback received, adjustments made, and a plan for collecting information concerning the effectiveness of a new schedule that supports the use of job-embedded professional learning.

Source: These tools are adapted from *Professional Learning Initiative Analysis: A Workbook for States and Districts* (Learning Forward, 2013) and *Becoming a Learning School* (Learning Forward, 2009).

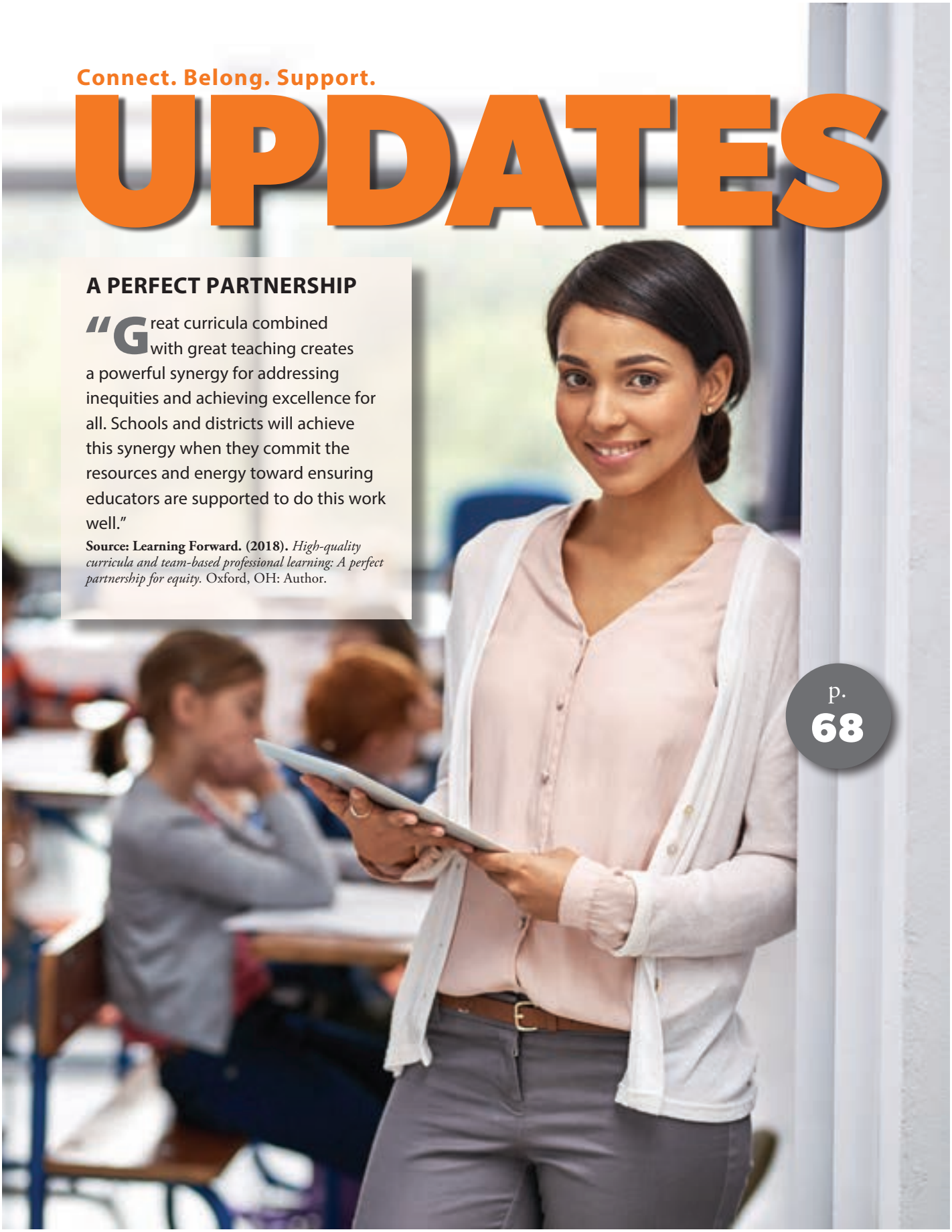
Connect. Belong. Support.

UPDATES

A PERFECT PARTNERSHIP

"Great curricula combined with great teaching creates a powerful synergy for addressing inequities and achieving excellence for all. Schools and districts will achieve this synergy when they commit the resources and energy toward ensuring educators are supported to do this work well."

Source: Learning Forward. (2018). *High-quality curricula and team-based professional learning: A perfect partnership for equity.* Oxford, OH: Author.



p. 68

UPDATES

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Selecting high-quality, aligned curricula is key.
- Using a standards-aligned curriculum well requires skillful professional learning.
- Investing in leadership at the school and district level is essential.
- Ensuring expert teacher leaders is also important.
- Effective team learning is part of a larger instructional improvement and learning system.

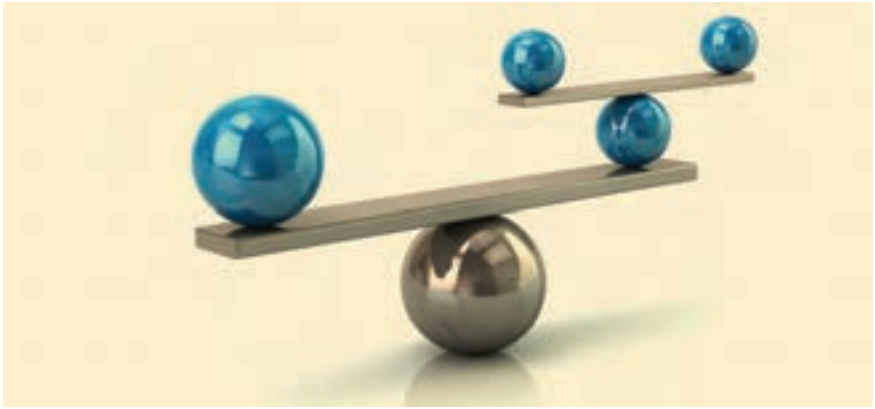
CHALLENGES:

- Aligning assessments, observations, and curriculum.
- Establishing sufficient regularly scheduled time and structures for PLCs and other learning strategies.
- Applying change management strategies.

ACTIONS NEEDED:

- Build deeper knowledge about this issue.
- Assess the quality of the curriculum.
- Establish professional learning communities.
- Strengthen learning teams.
- Develop building and team-level expertise.

To download the report: **www.learningforward.org/perfectpartnership.**



REPORT OUTLINES WAYS TO MEET THE EQUITY CHALLENGE

Learning Forward's new report, *High-Quality Curricula and Team-Based Professional Learning: A Perfect Partnership for Equity*, explores the premise that there's nothing more powerful than great teachers skillfully using great instructional materials to motivate and engage students in their learning.

Scan the vision and mission statements of schools, and it is nearly impossible to find a school that doesn't commit to educating "all" students or meet "each" or "every" student's need. Yet we know that many schools fall far short of this mark.

Too many students don't experience the same high-quality learning experiences that even their peers across the aisle, hall, or county have access to. This is an equity challenge.

Combine the uneven results within and across districts with the fact that the students more likely to be lagging are students of color and students from high-poverty contexts, and the equity challenge is compounded.

Among the factors that schools have the power to address, the quality of teaching and the quality of the curriculum materials are two that, when integrated and improved with intention, have the potential to answer those equity challenges.

When all students experience high-quality teaching, they are more likely to learn. When all classrooms are filled with high-quality instructional materials, students are more likely to learn. Establishing these conditions for all learners will help close achievement gaps.

Three real-world examples included in the report illustrate how schools and school systems are working to support teachers to skillfully use high-quality, standards-aligned curricula, by providing teachers with the time and expertise to use those curricula well, with a focus on team-based, collaborative learning.

The report also provides lessons learned across these sites and action steps to get schools and districts started on the journey.

3 states selected to join What Matters Now Network

Learning Forward has selected three states — Maryland, Ohio, and Rhode Island — to participate in the What Matters Now Network, a community of state-based coalitions of educators and policymakers.

Each state will identify a coalition of stakeholders from state to classroom level to engage in learning to inform policy and practice improvements. Learning Forward will facilitate the network.

The coalitions will support educators in implementing high-quality curriculum and instructional materials. Within each state, practitioners will apply improvement science methods, performing rapid-cycle testing in local contexts to deepen the state-level coalition's understanding of potential improvements.

Ultimately, practitioner-driven solutions will inform policy moves at the state level so that more students have access to effective teaching and learning.

"We are thrilled to have these states committed to the critical work practitioners will undertake," said Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward. "We're impressed by each state's unique and sustained approach to professional learning systems as a means to improve outcomes for all students and look forward to facilitating their next steps toward excellence."

The states chosen have demonstrated an interest in leveraging improvement science to achieve equity as well as the political will and capacity for implementing substantive change across systems. Each state determines the context in which it will involve educators in the testing of practices that address the specific curricular challenges the state decides to address.

Practitioners will apply improvement science methods, performing rapid-cycle testing in local contexts to deepen the state-level coalition's understanding of potential improvements.

CPRL, the Columbia University Center for Public Research and Leadership, will support the network through its improvement science expertise, facilitating the development and implementation of each state coalition's inquiry approach to achieving its goal.

While all participants in the network are focused on the overall goal of transforming professional learning systems to achieve implementation of high-quality curriculum materials, each state determines its particular focus within that goal.

The What Matters Now Network is grounded in the vision established in *What Matters Now: A New Compact for Teaching and Learning,* the 2016 report from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF). NCTAF and Learning Forward merged last year.

The network is supported by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. "Leaders of professional learning at all levels of the educational system have the responsibility to support classroom teachers with opportunities to learn from using high-quality instructional materials designed for more rigorous college and career-ready standards," said Jim Short, program director of Leadership and Teaching to Advance Learning within the National Education Program at the Carnegie Corporation of New York. "Improvement science offers a way to learn from practice to inform better policies on linking professional learning systems to the implementation of high-quality curricula."

ABSTRACTS

April 2018, Vol. 39, No. 2

FOCUS
GREAT STARTS

Middle school flips the script:
With Inside-Out PD, professional learning starts in the classroom.
By Niamh McQuillan

The challenges of a learner-centered initiative at a Baltimore middle school led the school's leaders to reconfigure its professional development model. Two central ideas were key: Generate professional learning from inside the classroom, and streamline the demands placed on teachers. They established four inquiry teams, continuously improved the model, and made changes in the second year based on what they'd learned in the first. A positive school culture, effective use of technology, and growth in student math and reading scores are the result.

Remote possibilities:
Rural teachers in Colorado hone their skills as they connect with peers.
By Beth Melton

The Northwest Colorado Board of Cooperative Educational Services used a U.S. Department of Education Investing in Innovation grant to address the challenges of providing high-quality professional development to teachers in rural schools. To that end, the board designed professional learning that leverages technology, aligns to the state teacher evaluation, and adapts Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning to a multidistrict setting. Feedback is positive, and teachers attribute increases in student engagement and test results to new practices they learned.

Math makeover:
A school-university partnership transforms elementary math instruction.
By Nicole Rigelman, Sarah Crane, Kellie Petrick, and Donna Shrier

At Jackson Elementary School in Hillsboro, Oregon, collaboration between Portland State University and Hillsboro School District personnel helped create an instructional environment where kids thrive because teachers are working and learning together. They built a collaborative culture by engaging in lesson observation and making use of existing PLCs. The principal, the mathematics specialist, and the university supervisor offer their perspectives.

Filling the teacher's toolbox:
Blended learning course turns supports and accommodations into daily practice.
By Kelly Bikle

A two-day standardized testing workshop turned out to be the inspiration for building a blended learning course for educators in California's Palo Alto Unified School District. Using Schoology, a learning management system, a district team created a course that would help teachers learn a range of supports and accommodations as well as strategies they could use in real time and with real impact on the students they puzzled over each day. The experience provided lessons about the challenges of scaling, the need for ongoing support, and the importance of clarifying the design model.

Connect the heart and hands of literacy:
Link curriculum renewal to professional learning for a solid improvement plan.
By Sandi Novak and Bonnie Houck

New Prague School District in Minnesota is finding success by linking a systematic professional learning process to the curriculum renewal cycle. As teachers implement the curriculum, they're reaping the benefits of a well-designed, carefully implemented plan for professional development and resource allocation. The three-year plan is still in progress, but already, when visitors enter the New Prague Schools, they see the value placed on literacy.

WRITE FOR *THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL*

- Themes are posted at **www.learningforward.org/publications/jsd/upcoming-themes.**
- 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/publications/jsd/writers-guidelines.**

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/publications/jsd/writers-guidelines.**

IDEAS

Principal evaluation as a tool for growth:
How to help principals lead and learn.
By Donna J. Micheaux and Jennifer L. Parvin

Principal supervisors are typically, although not always, former principals who have been successful in moving a campus in a positive direction. However, the skills that enabled them to be successful as principals are not always commensurate with their job of leading the development of a diverse set of leaders across multiple schools. To use principal evaluation as a tool for growth, they must be able to coach and give powerful feedback, develop and deliver adult learning, facilitate group learning processes, and cultivate a culture of transparency and continuous learning. These seven strategies can help. *This article is sponsored by The Wallace Foundation.*

A better blend:
Structure and strategy increase co-teaching's impact in an inclusive classroom.
By William C. Hunter, Jennifer Holbrook, Lisa A. Dieker, and Adrian Christopher-Allen

Seven grades 7 and 8 math co-teaching teams in a rural Midsouthern school district engaged in professional development and virtual coaching to plan and implement team teaching in an evidence-based practice called Numbered Heads Together. The cooperative learning strategy attempts to provide more equitable response opportunities to all students, especially those who don't typically raise their hands to answer.

VOICES

CALL TO ACTION

What it takes to make a great start.
By Stephanie Hirsh

What are the essential conditions for launching a new initiative? First, decide who should be involved at the start. Once you've done that, gather your data and create a strong communication plan.

BEING FORWARD

Lessons learned in the military apply to education, too.
By Alan Ingram

A 22-year-career in the United States Air Force combined with experience as a federal programs director, superintendent, and deputy commissioner at a state agency offers unique insights into leadership development.

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

Awardees' grant projects demonstrate foundation's impact.
By Heather Lageman

Centered around the Standards for Professional Learning and their power to transform educator practice and student learning, the Learning Forward Foundation's impact has a ripple effect across individuals, teams, and organizations.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

Want to create lasting change? Listen first, design second.
By Nader Twal

California's Long Beach Unified School District is one of 22 U.S. school systems that participated in Learning Forward's Redesign PD Community of Practice. Using a problem-solving process called design thinking, the group accelerated implementation by working with stakeholders to innovate, prototype, and test ideas before going to scale.

RESEARCH

RESEARCH REVIEW

New report in Canada study series focuses on Alberta.
By Pamela Osmond-Johnson, Ken Zeichner, and Carol Campbell

The State of Educators' Professional Learning in Alberta: Executive Summary is the latest in a series of studies of professional learning in Canada commissioned and supported by Learning Forward. The study identifies key components and features of effective professional learning and highlights findings from educators.

INDEX OF ADVERTISERS
Regent University..... inside front cover
Just ASK Publications & Professional Development... outside back cover

AT A GLANCE

Put the learning in your PLC

THE FIVE STAGES of the learning team cycle engage teams of teachers and other educators in collaborative inquiry to address student learning challenges. Schools and districts create the conditions where learning teams can thrive. Learning team members engage deeply as learners, offer support and feedback to peers, and assume collective responsibility for all students impacted by the team.

For more information, see ***Becoming a Learning Team: A Guide to a Teacher-Led Cycle of Continuous Improvement*** at www.learningforward.org/store or 800-727-7288.

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.

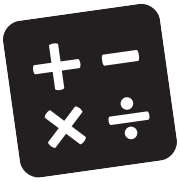
Data
… uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.

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
LEADERSHIP	Districts are looking to transform principal evaluation into a growth opportunity just as they do with teachers, and principal supervisors play a critical role in this change. See "Principal evaluation as a tool for growth: How to help principals lead and learn," (p. 52). 	1. What support do principals and principal supervisors need to shift their approach to engaging in feedback conversations? 2. How do district leaders most effectively advocate for substantive time for principal learning, and how is that different from what we expect for teacher learning?
RESOURCES	In "Remote possibilities: Rural teachers in Colorado hone their skills as they connect with peers," the authors offer a glimpse into the rich technology resources they're making available through an online resource library for teachers. Coaches identify resources that are "evidence-based, high-quality, and relevant" that permit remote teachers to engage in ongoing learning (p. 28). 	1. In what ways can technology resources support sustained and embedded learning? What are some cautions for relying on technology for that purpose? 2. How do professional learning providers ensure they are creating or using processes to carefully screen technology resources for professional learning?
LEARNING DESIGNS	Educators in the article "Math makeover: A school-university partnership transforms elementary math instruction" leverage a range of learning designs to achieve their intended outcomes, including lesson study, book studies, and PLCs (p. 34). 	1. What relationship, if any, is there between the content area or student learning objective under study in professional learning and the adult learning design appropriate for engaging learners? 2. What are the benefits and drawbacks of having an external partner in planning and implementing school-based collaborative learning?

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

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