

THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

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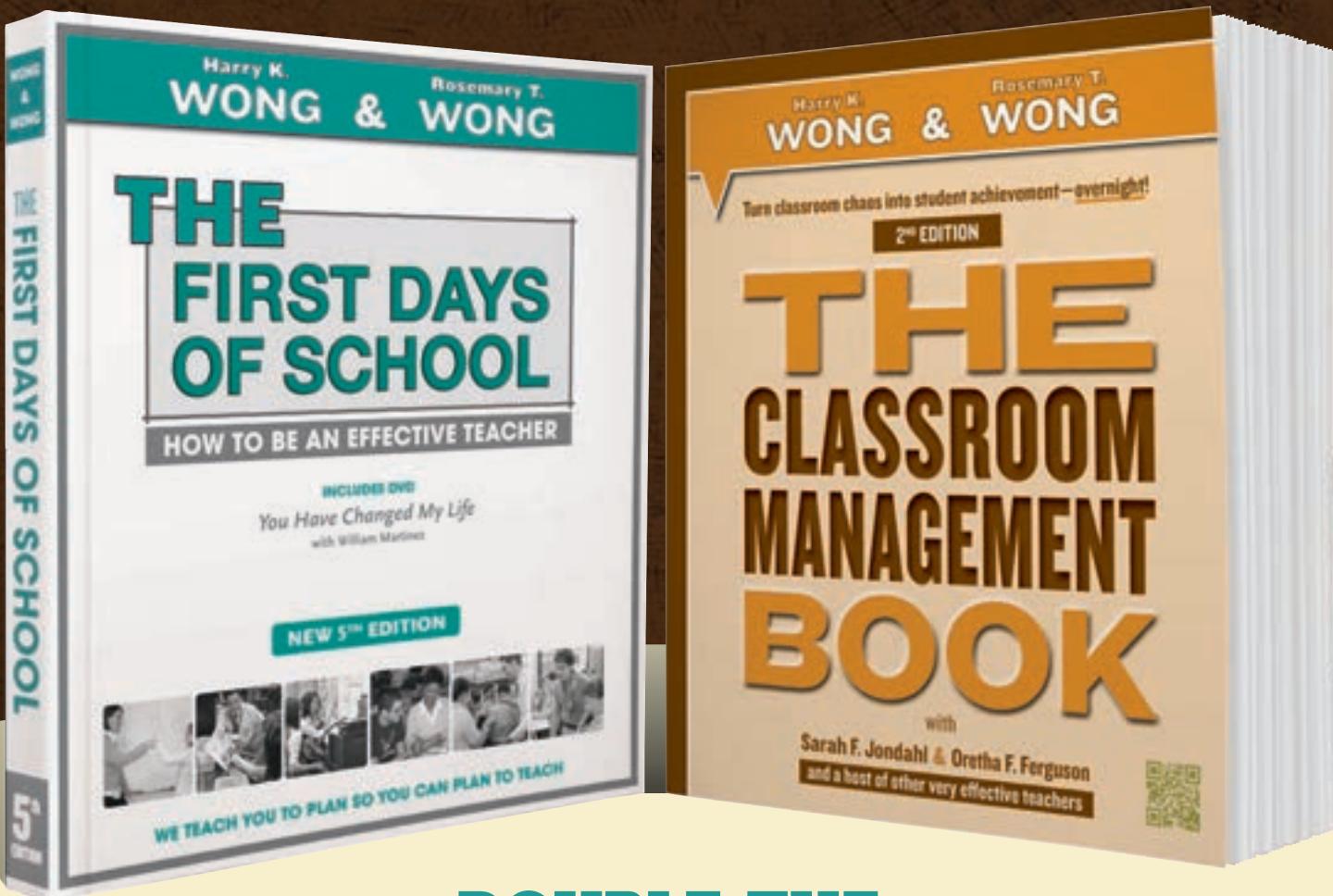
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THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

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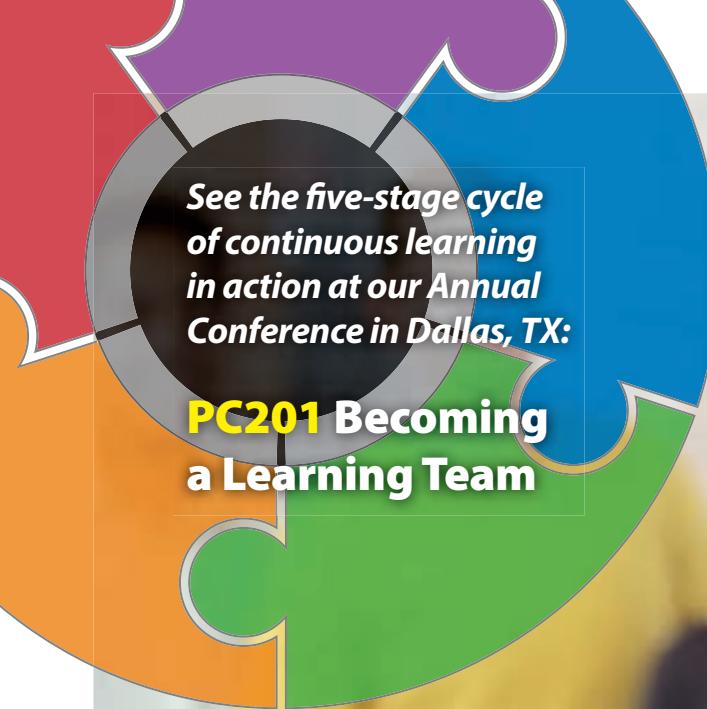
Students talk about inequity



When she was a writer-in-residence at The Education Trust, Brooke Haycock interviewed students around the country about their experiences in school. Some of these student comments paint a vivid portrait of how students experience and recognize differences in learning opportunities.

"We were going to be taking the same exact AP test as the students we met from the other school. We needed to know the same exact things. But while they were starting to read *The Odyssey*, we were reading *The Hunger Games*. There's nothing wrong with *The Hunger Games* — I read it when I was 12. It just really struck me as unfair."

"In the 'regular' [not advanced] classes, the teacher would go over some content and then you'd watch a movie about it. And then you'd do, like, a worksheet assignment, go over it, and then move on. So it was just kind of — it's just trying to get you the grade. They just want you to get the grade and get it out of the way... for the next kids to come in."



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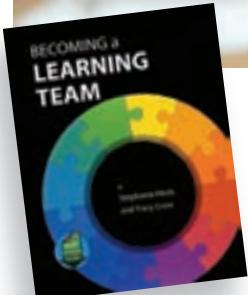
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HERE WE GO

Suzanne Bouffard

Multiple perspectives shine a bright light on equity

Producing a magazine takes real collaboration — not just to share the workload, but to generate ideas and combine multiple perspectives. That collaboration is what makes the work rewarding for us and useful for you. Learning professionals know how important collaboration is for broadening the lens beyond personal experience and challenging the status quo.

For this issue, I was fortunate to collaborate with guest editors Jill Harrison Berg and Sonia Caus Gleason on a topic that underlies all of our work and confronts the status quo head-on: educational equity.

Gleason and Berg are both long-time Learning Forward members and contributors to our publications. Their perspectives and expertise have expanded our thinking formally and informally, and I'm delighted that you'll have the opportunity to benefit from their wisdom as well.

As authors in this issue point out, equity is a goal everyone seems to get behind in theory, but few have yet to realize. Even defining equity is complex. Stories can help us understand equity, and so can data. Images can be illuminating, too. Angus Maguire from the Center for Story-based Strategy shares with us a tool for redesigning the now-familiar graphic depicting the difference between equity and equality (p. 72).

To help all of us take the first steps and then the next steps to achieving

equity, our guest editors have curated a set of articles for the Focus section that address both the big picture of why equity matters and the nuts and bolts of how to get there. The strategies and examples the authors share highlight the fact that this work must occur on multiple levels.

Glenn Singleton (p. 28) writes about equity as “an unapologetically top-down process” that requires leadership at the highest levels. Not incongruously, though, Bill Bigelow and Linda Christensen (p. 48) share their experience promoting equity from the ground up by engaging teachers in a “democratic and social justice-oriented vision of professional learning.”

Joaquin Noguera and Pedro Noguera (p. 44) bridge these two ends of the spectrum, calling for a system of mutual accountability in which all education stakeholders demand from one another attention to equity.

To work toward equity, we need to be reflective, transparent, and vulnerable. We must examine our beliefs and implicit biases, both as individuals and as members of teams and larger systems. On pp. 66-68, Berg and Gleason provide a tool for asking the tough questions and taking the next steps to do that. Throughout the issue, authors detail how to create spaces for engaging in these conversations with colleagues that are both safe and productive. Discussions about race, class, gender, and ability are unquestionably difficult, but



unequivocally important.

This issue is neither the beginning nor the end of Learning Forward’s commitment to promoting equity through professional learning. As Stephanie Hirsh and Fred Brown explain on p. 8, the board of trustees recently revised our organizational vision statement to make our commitment to equity more explicit to all of our stakeholders.

We hope this issue challenges your beliefs and assumptions, stretches your strategies, and helps you reaffirm your own commitment to ensuring that each and every child can access excellent teaching and learning every day.

•

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THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

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VOICES

PUBLIC EDUCATION FACES AN EQUITY CHALLENGE

While many educators aspire to the ideal of equity, the practice of equity in public education remains a work in progress. And there is much work to do. From hiring and funding priorities to disproportionate academic outcomes and responsive interventions, public education faces an equity challenge.

Until every child has meaningful access to an education system that fully understands and is willing to address his or her cultural, physical, social, and emotional needs, we will continue to have a two-tiered public education system. The students who fit into the prescribed formula will become lifelong learners, while those students whose backgrounds and experiences differ will face greater challenges in becoming their fullest and best selves as learners.

"A vision for equity starts at the top"

p. 12

Stephanie Hirsh



Frederick Brown



Equity drives Learning Forward's vision

At Learning Forward, we fundamentally believe every child deserves access to excellent teaching and learning every day, regardless of his or her ZIP code or family income. Socioeconomic conditions, race, gender, ethnic background, and other factors should not be predictors for educational attainment.

We believe school systems and other learning environments have to be relentless in addressing the issue of expanding learning opportunities for each and every student while building on the strengths all children bring to the classroom.

These beliefs are fundamental to our approaches to achieving equity. They underlie the decision the board of trustees made earlier this year to explicitly include equity in Learning Forward's vision statement: **Equity and excellence in teaching and learning.**

We recognize that districts and schools have many tools to address their equity challenges, and we believe effective professional learning can play a crucial role. How a district defines equity will determine the role professional learning can play in helping the system achieve its goals.

For example, if a district has a goal



focused on closing achievement gaps for populations that haven't performed as well as others, the professional learning strategy might include a focus on helping teachers try different approaches, differentiate to meet learning needs, and find ways to build on the strengths of all students.

Another equity goal for a district could be increasing the diversity of its teaching force to more closely align to its student demographics. In this case, the professional learning strategy could include supporting principals and central office staff in strategies to attract, seek out, and support teacher candidates. Such a strategy would include developing an induction process that values culture, embraces diversity in the teaching force, and builds the efficacy of new teachers.

A district's equity strategies connect directly to the attitudes and beliefs of its workforce. The professional learning strategy can help central office and

building staff engage in deep exploration of their values, beliefs, and assumptions about children who have life experiences different from their own.

This professional learning approach is not something a district or school accomplishes in a two-hour sit-and-get session or a professional development day for all staff at the beginning of the year. Instead, it requires an ongoing commitment to understanding the core issues and creating ways of working that allow educators to return to the topic, practice strategies, receive feedback, and assess their new practices and behaviors.

This professional learning strategy also requires a firm commitment from district leaders to stay engaged until new behaviors are sustained and equity goals are met.

As we consider and clarify our own approaches to equity, we see that some students have not been served by education. While we recognize that professional learning is essential for all educators to improve, we changed our vision to include equity because we recognize that educators and the students they serve are in vastly different contexts and situations.

We are making a commitment to explore pathways that support those

Continued on p. 10

ASK

Joe McFarland and Nikki Mouton

Untangling 2 important change tools

Q What is the difference between a logic model and a theory of change?

In their role as coaches for the Learning Forward Academy, Joe McFarland and Nikki Mouton encounter this question a lot. Both logic models and theories of change help us plan, implement, and evaluate programs and initiatives. They are useful for targeting problems of practice like the ones Academy members identify and for a host of other goals. McFarland and Mouton weigh in on the difference between the two, how they can complement one another, and why we shouldn't get too hung up on terminology.

A: Theory of change and logic models have many commonalities, and it's understandable that people often confuse them. Yet there are significant differences in how they are used. They address related but distinct questions and encompass different levels of detail based on their purposes.

A theory of change answers the question, "Where do we want to go?" It provides stakeholders with a framework for how to get to the final goal and what that goal "looks like" when accomplished. It articulates the understanding of the systems, processes, and behaviors that are believed to bring about a desired change, along with



Joe McFarland and Nikki Mouton are coaches of Learning Forward Academy Class of 2020, whose theme is "To infinity and beyond" — a saying from the movie *Toy Story*. McFarland and Mouton stand with cutouts of two of the movie's main characters during the Learning Forward Institutes in Portland, Oregon, in July.

specifying the assumptions underlying the change.

Theory of change provides a mechanism for stakeholders to become involved in the process of developing and implementing a new initiative and can help create a compelling cause, which is important for getting buy-in from all stakeholders, as is critical in any professional learning initiative.

A logic model answers the question, "How will we get to where we want to go?" All too often, we educators are so focused on the development and implementation of plans for improvement that we overlook the importance of engaging in a comprehensive analysis of the project, what it is designed to do, who needs to be involved, the resources needed for it to be successful, and, most importantly, how success looks and how it will be assessed.

The logic model provides the framework to ensure all factors are taken into consideration to ensure success of the goal. It is the detailed action plan for taking all components into consideration and developing the systems, structure, activities, models, and resources (human and material) to bring the goal to fruition. It helps stakeholders ensure effective implementation and evaluate the components.

It details:

- Inputs: all of the required elements from the implementing organization, including human resources, fiscal resources, and others;
- Outputs: what the program or initiative does, such as the services it provides; and
- Outcomes: short-term, intermediate, and long-term

results expected to occur as a result.

A building analogy helps explain the function of theory of change and logic models. Think of your initiative as a house being designed and built. The theory of change is what architects call the schematic design, which gives a general picture of what the house will look like, including the major components, structure, and look, and how all the pieces fit together. This is the part of the design that is used to work out the “big picture” and that is shown to clients to get their buy-in and input in the design process.

The logic model is a process that architects call design development, in which all the details are laid out, like where the mechanicals will go, what hardware will be used. It can be tweaked as necessary when unanticipated needs arise. In

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more information about logic models and theory of change, including examples, check out these resources.

- *Assessing Impact: Evaluating Professional Learning* (3rd edition) by Joellen Killion. Available at the Learning Forward bookstore, learningforward.org/store or 800-727-7288.
- *Logic Models for Selecting, Designing, and Implementing Evidence-Based School Leadership Interventions*, published by the RAND Corporation. Available at www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Logic-Model-Evidence-Based-School-Leadership-Interventions.pdf.

professional learning, as in architecture, design is an iterative process.

As you consider how to use these two tools to complement one another in your professional learning initiatives, don’t get hung up on the terminology. The important thing is to develop an intentional process to guide design, implementation, and evaluation to ensure progress toward your final outcome goals.

•
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OUR TAKE / Stephanie Hirsh and Frederick Brown

Continued from p. 8

educators, children, and schools that have traditionally been underserved and those that have the greatest needs. Our commitment to equity is a significant driver in our recent shift to explore in depth the intersection of curriculum and professional learning.

Our commitment to equity also undergirds Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning. When we revised the standards in 2011, we embedded the concept of equity throughout. We believed then, as we do now, that when a district aligns its practices to the standards, each and every child will experience excellent teaching and learning every day.

However, we know that we must do more. While our new vision statement is an important step for our organization, it isn’t the only step to take. Going forward, we will view all of our strategies through an equity lens

with the goal of making sure our efforts will help districts and schools ensure each and every child exceeds provincial, state, and local standards.

We also commit to reflect on our own assumptions, beliefs, and practices and how they can evolve. This is also a central task of high-quality professional learning. In that spirit, we are reflecting on these questions and issues:

- In what other ways should we define equity? In what other ways might districts and schools define it?
- What strategies and drivers have demonstrated success in ensuring that underserved students achieve high standards?
- Where do the biggest gaps lie for students? How can we influence policies and practices related to professional learning to address those gaps?
- How can the Standards for

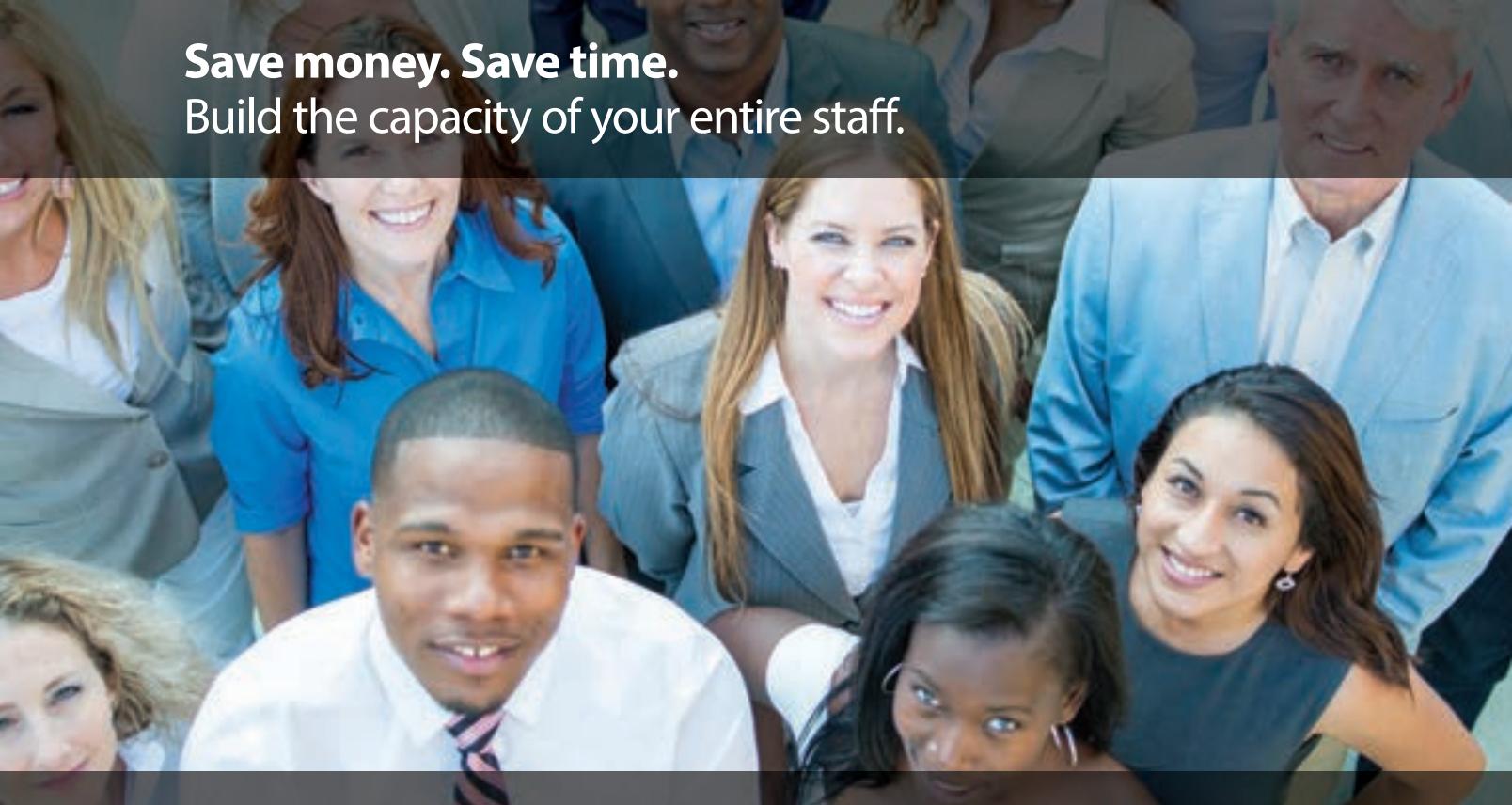
Professional Learning be more explicit in addressing issues of equity?

- What types of learning might we craft that help systems address their equity challenges and opportunities?

As we continue to grapple with our equity questions, we ask you to send us yours. What questions and issues are you reflecting on? What new ideas or reflections does reading this issue of *The Learning Professional* bring up for you? Please share them with us.

•
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BEING FORWARD

Alan Ingram

A vision for equity starts at the top

Hey, that's not fair!" It's a credo repeated righteously on playgrounds or amongst young siblings regularly. Unfair treatment, even at that early age, stirs a visceral reaction no matter who's involved. And while the consequences of inequitable treatment may be as benign as an extra turn on the swing or a more lenient bedtime, the stakes are much higher when the inequities exist within the realm of education.

I turned to a career in public education in 1996, having served 22 years in the U.S. Air Force. It was a natural next step in my commitment to public service and the ideals of making a meaningful difference in the lives of children of all creeds, colors, and backgrounds. There is no arguing that the most important elements of a quality education are the interactions between student and teacher.

We must do everything we can to build educators' capacity to ensure *all* students' experiences with their teachers lead to learning. Therefore, as leaders throughout the system, we must continually address policies, protocols, practices, and resources that lead to a more effective teaching and learning environment.

Building equity is the first step toward effective teaching and learning. In fact, it is a principle that student teachers learn early on. The importance of differentiated instruction could serve as a case study for the importance of

Learning Forward's board of trustees is proud of the organization's new vision (see p. 8) and committed to fulfilling its long-term implications.



equity in itself. Imagine the teacher whose lesson plans consist solely of lectures. He tests the students and feels satisfied when only one-third of the class earns a passing grade. The teacher believes his teaching method was fair because all of the students received the same information, the same way.

This teaching method can't be considered effective because educators understand that students learn in different ways. Teachers build equity in instructional practice when they use various methods to teach so that the visual learner and the interactive learner have the same access to learning as the audible learner.

In that sense, differentiated instruction is a building block for equity. Our public education system

must differentiate the resources, practices, and opportunities for schools and districts much like a teacher differentiates instruction for student success. Equality and equity are not synonymous. Equality is easy to dole out with its formulaic premise. Achieving equity is much more complex. It calls for empathy and demands understanding and truth.

Equity is possible only when leaders at all levels understand the cultures, passions, strengths, and challenges of those entrusted in their care. When leaders do not understand those things, they must have the humility to admit it and the desire to learn and act responsively.

While many educators aspire to the ideal of equity, the practice of equity

in public education remains a work in progress. And there is much work to do. From hiring and funding priorities to disproportionate academic outcomes and responsive interventions, public education faces an equity challenge.

Until every child has meaningful access to an education system that fully understands and is willing to address his or her cultural, physical, social, and emotional needs, we will continue to have a two-tiered public education system. The students who fit into the prescribed formula will become lifelong learners, while those students whose backgrounds and experiences differ will face greater challenges in becoming their fullest and best selves as learners.

We see education's inequities play out daily in schools across the U.S. A recent report from the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights found that black students and students with disabilities in K-12 schools are suspended and arrested at much higher rates than their counterparts (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2018). The report noted that black students are disproportionately dealt the harshest exclusionary penalties (i.e. expulsions and out-of-school suspensions) and black boys are far more likely to be disciplined.

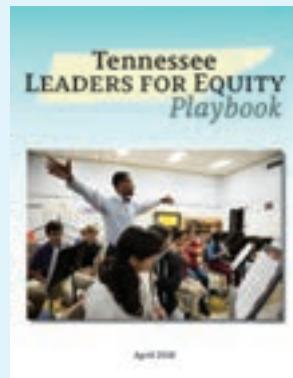
Further, the disproportionate representation of minority students in special education programs can have immediate and long-term negative consequences, not the least of which is the mislabeling of a child's academic potential that too often leads to lower expectations. Until we investigate

STARTING POINT FOR LEADERS

One example of an excellent resource is the *Tennessee Leaders for Equity Playbook*. The playbook serves as a tool — not a mandate — and outlines seven equity commitments aimed at assisting leaders to make the needed shifts in mindset and practice that benefit all students.

The Tennessee ESSA Leadership Learning Community developed the playbook as part of a joint initiative with the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Council of Great City Schools, the National Urban League and The Wallace Foundation, with input and feedback from a comprehensive group of stakeholders.

This resource offers an actionable framework and a flexible resource to support school districts and community leaders in improving schools and outcomes for all students. The playbook is available at www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/reports/Tennessee-Leaders-for-Equity-Playbook.pdf.



how our own practices as educators contribute to such disproportionate results, we will not meet our aspirations to change.

Clearly, the demographic makeup and complexities of the U.S. are changing. Educators are compelled to address the urgency and critical importance of building and sustaining an education system that is just and equitable. Supporting educators to do this becomes a top item on every leader's professional learning agenda, and leaders can't neglect their own capacity on this topic.

A vision for equity starts at the top. All educators — whether superintendents, teachers, instructional coaches, or directors of curriculum — owe it to their students and

communities to explore their assumptions, knowledge, and skills with a willingness to change.

Like children on a playground, adults recognize unjust practices when we see them. The question is, will we as educators be brave enough to shout out, "Hey, that's not fair!" And are we committed enough to take action to change it?

REFERENCE

U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. (2018). 2015-16 civil rights data collection: School climate and safety. Washington, DC: Author.

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Alan Ingram is president of Learning Forward. ■

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Sandeep Dutt

A PATH FORWARD FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN INDIA

Position: Social entrepreneur and chairman of Bhadrajun Artisans Trust

Location: Rajasthan, India

Connection to Learning Forward:

Chairman of Learning Forward India

When he established the India affiliate: 2015

Why he promotes professional learning:

India's teachers are undervalued and under-supported. They need opportunities to network and learn. With little financial support in India, teachers must take responsibility for their own learning.

Three keys to Learning Forward India's success:

A relatively new but growing affiliate, Learning Forward India started working in one school and is now expanding across the country. He sees these as the biggest elements of success so far: building a nationwide community of educators and resources, prioritizing teachers' happiness and empowerment, and embracing social media and technology.

Sandeep Dutt is chairman of Learning Forward India, which he founded as an international affiliate of Learning Forward in 2015. He is a social entrepreneur, coach, consultant, and speaker focusing on school culture and school transformation.

Since 2012, he has been chairman of the Bhadrajun Artisans Trust, which runs the Fabindia Schools Programme with the goal of involving the community and helping rural youth live their dreams. He shares his passion for professional learning with educators in multiple regions of India and continues to expand the reach of professional learning knowledge in the country.

Q: Why did you decide to focus on professional learning as a tool for improving education in your region?

A: For long-lasting success in professional learning, educators need to be part of a culture of learning. This is largely lacking in India. Liberals arts is not a preferred area of study here, and teaching is not a favored profession like in many other parts of the world. Most people in the profession are teachers by chance and not by choice.

In my experience, few professional learning opportunities are available to teachers, and those that exist are expensive and run by profit-minded



people with no real background in education. In this context, for teaching and learning to improve, teachers need to take charge of their learning. Otherwise, there is no future.

Fortunately, with the explosion of information on the Internet and low-cost data services delivered in India, there is an opportunity for teachers to connect with and learn from their colleagues in India and elsewhere in the world. For example, we can now create professional learning communities. But for this to happen, teachers have to take charge of their own learning because no infrastructure exists from an outside entity.

Q: You have been creating professional learning infrastructure from the ground up. How did you start building capacity where there was none?

LEARNING FORWARD'S STANDARDS AT WORK		
This table outlines the role of Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning in Learning Forward India's Professional Learning Program. Over the first three years, the program has made progress in implementing the standards.		
Standard	2015	2018
Learning Communities	Educators worked in isolation and professional learning was only an outcome of unstructured self-learning.	Trained educators have formed a dedicated chapter/learning community to expand Professional Learning Program access to other local schools and initiated chapters in other regions as well.
Leadership	No contribution from leadership and no professional support to guide/mentor educators.	Cultural change to incorporate educator voice in planning and decision-making, keeping in mind student learning outcomes.
Resources	No prescribed resources/courses for professional development.	The Professional Learning Program is grounded in concepts of transformative learning and collaborative inquiry in <i>Schools Can Change</i> and concepts outlined in the Standards for Professional Learning.
Data	Lacked understanding of student, educator needs as no empirical data to support any findings.	100% results in partner schools. One of the pilot schools was classified as a change maker school under the Green Schools Program.
Learning Designs	No predesigned program.	Predesigned three-year certificate program during which educators commit a minimum time period to complete allocated activities.
Implementation	Even though English is the medium of instruction, teachers did not use English extensively and there was little, if any, use of technology.	Educators learn by engaging in workshops, webinars, staff exchanges with partner schools, and e-learning exercises to find solutions to real-time challenges.
Outcomes	No structured outcomes that show an impact on educator effectiveness or student performance.	Teachers voluntarily put in extra time and effort. Qualified educators / trainers for new program cohorts. More proficient use of technology. Educators took their learning to class.

Source: Learning Forward India

A: My colleagues and I started with one school, the Fabindia School. The Fabindia School is a co-ed private school from preschool to what is considered high school in the U.S. It serves the children of artisans in the rural areas around Bali, a small village on arid land at the foothills of the Aravali mountains. The school started with 11 students in 1992 and has grown to nearly 500 students.

Before 2015, teacher professional learning at the school was limited. Teachers worked in isolation, as with other schools in rural India. There was little, if any, use of technology. Even though English was the medium of instruction, teachers did not use English

extensively for their own learning or working together. My colleagues and I wanted to change all of this. We looked inward and turned our focus to changing the instructional culture.

In 2015, we started by creating the Professional Learning Program, a three-year certificate program during which teachers engage in workshops, webinars, staff exchanges with partner schools, and e-learning exercises to find solutions to teaching and learning challenges. It immerses participants in a model of inquiry and problem-based learning tailored to individual needs and focused on collaborative learning

Educators divide their time between structured training sessions and self-

directed professional learning, with increasing amounts of self-directed time as they progress from year to year. The minimum time required to participate in the program increases from 90 hours in year one to 150 hours in year three. But we find that teachers voluntarily put in extra time and effort beyond what is required.

Q: What resources did you look to as you started these professional learning efforts?

A: The Professional Learning Program is grounded in the concepts of transformative learning and collaborative inquiry in *Schools Can*

Change by Dale Lick, Karl Clauget, and Carlene Murphy (Corwin, 2013). This guide provides a step-by-step, systemic approach to the change creation process.

It is based on the principle that genuine, effective school improvement requires leaders and teachers to be part of a broad-based, creative change system that focuses on generating improved teacher practices for enhancing student learning.

We also grounded the Professional Learning Program in Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning. We especially emphasize the Learning Communities and Leadership standards. The table on p. 15 shows how the program has moved us toward implementing Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning.

Q: How are you expanding the work you have done in Bali to other parts of India?

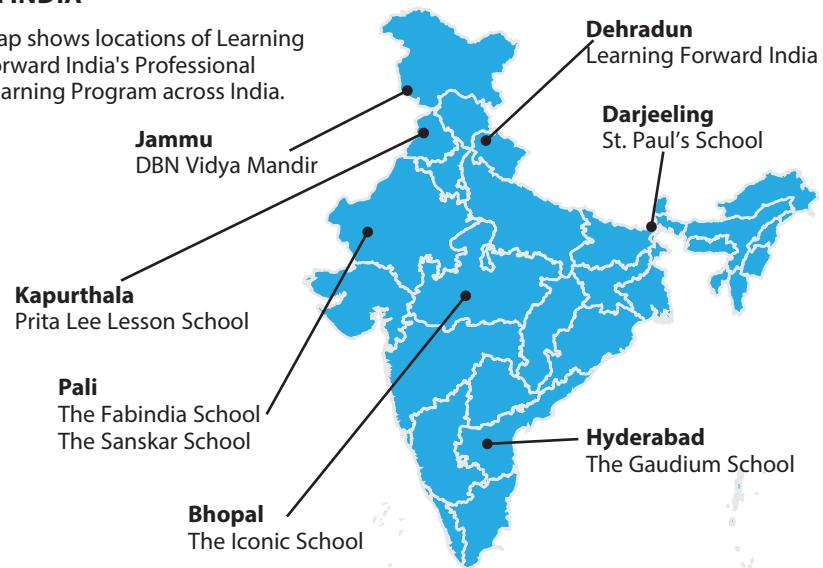
A: Professional Learning Program graduates, along with my colleagues and I, have established a Learning Forward India chapter at Bali. Our goal is to build a national network to support professional learning.

Through this organization, we are expanding program access for local area schools in central and southern India. From the 16 teachers in the program, six have taken it upon themselves to put in place a national training team. They and their colleagues have formed action teams to build the association for professional learning.

We have also developed My Good School, a process through which schools can get a designation showing the value the school places on professional learning and student achievement. To achieve the designation, a school must demonstrate commitment to the personal and social development of individuals and offer an environment where experiential learning is made

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN INDIA

Map shows locations of Learning Forward India's Professional Learning Program across India.



possible through activities beyond just book study. This brings to life learning that would otherwise be theoretical and uncoordinated.

To further broaden our impact, the Fabindia School hosts the annual Learning Forward India retreat in October. The goal of the retreat is to foster social interaction among educators and professional learning that can empower them to work for better learning outcomes. The program includes professional learning sessions, discussions, and social events.

Q: What are some of the things educators outside of India can learn from your experience developing a professional learning infrastructure?

A: We have begun building a professional learning system with no support from the government or any institutions beyond the general support of the sponsors of the Fabindia School. We believe the key to the transformation is not resources themselves, but how we use the resources.

By using technology extensively, we are able to keep the cost low. And an important reason we can do this work

with few resources is that teachers are taking charge of their own learning. They volunteer their time and work beyond the required hours and the call of duty. Their enthusiasm keeps the work alive.

Teachers are now reaching out to schools in the vicinity of Bali to invite other teachers to pursue the Professional Learning Program, and they are traveling to locations where Learning Forward India is helping develop more opportunities for learning and development.

Engaged, motivated teachers and principals are establishing a sustainable model for delivering quality education in India. That model is now being replicated on a larger scale. The map above shows the Professional Learning Program's reach across India.

We will continue to spread our work because we believe the future of young people is in our hands, and we must do all we can to help them live their dreams by providing them with the best possible education. ■

Examine. Study. Understand.

RESEARCH

FOR LEARNING PROFESSIONALS, RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

A recent study by Northwestern University researchers examined the system of support and resources to which both district and external professional learning developers have access.

The study shines a light on relationships — to whom we go for what information — and suggests that the way educators seek out networks, partnerships, and resources matters for the kind of information they can access to improve their practice.

It raises thought-provoking questions about the expectations and focus of professional learning developers from different types of organizations, and whether all developers are prepared to fulfill Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning.

**"STUDY SPOTLIGHTS
EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL
AND PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS"**

p. 18





Elizabeth Foster

Study spotlights effectiveness of social and professional networks

►THE STUDY

Morel, R.P. & Coburn, C. (2018, August). Access, activation, and influence: How brokers mediate social capital among professional development providers. *American Educational Research Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831218788528>.

LET US HEAR FROM YOU

Do you have thoughts about this study or have recommendations of other research you'd like to see us cover? Email me at elizabeth.foster@learningforward.org.

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Elizabeth Foster (elizabeth.foster@learningforward.org) is associate director of standards, research, and strategy at Learning Forward. In each issue of *The Learning Professional*, Foster explores a recent research study to help practitioners understand the impact of particular professional learning practices on student outcomes. ■

Professional learning approaches and programs do not drop from the sky fully formed. Yet often those who are expected to engage in them — teachers and other staff — have little information about how these approaches developed and the type of expertise that shaped them. What goes into creating them? What kind of knowledge do the developers of professional learning need — and do they currently have it?

A recent study by Northwestern University researchers Richard Paquin Morel and Cynthia Coburn examined one potentially important element: the system of support and resources to which professional learning developers have access. The researchers studied both “system” providers (such as schools, districts, and education policymakers) and “nonsystem” providers (such as textbook publishers, nonprofits, and commercial enterprises).

Both groups develop and influence professional learning, yet they have different types of knowledge and access to resources, which influences how they design and inform professional learning for educators. Those processes are important to understand, because as we emphasize in Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning, the **Learning Designs** embedded in opportunities for educators matter, and are most effective when they have clear goals and incorporate the latest research and knowledge about teaching and learning.

The supports and conditions that facilitate effective professional learning are relevant to Learning Forward’s efforts to understand and promote the systemic conditions that enable and facilitate effective professional learning. Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning explain that **Resources** — including human resources and knowledge — are necessary to support the individuals and organizations who are informing, designing, leading, and engaging in professional learning.

This study and its elucidation of social and professional networks, and the roles and relationships that are leveraged in professional learning systems, will be of great interest to individuals interested in expanding their own networks, acting as a liaison among learning professionals, or improving their own networking strategies and opportunities. **Learning Communities**, a powerful lever for learning and an element of the standards, rely on professional networks and information sharing. There are points in the study that shine a light on relationships — to whom we go for what information — that might provide new ideas for individuals to seek out for networks, partnerships, and resources.

PARTICIPANTS: Social capital ‘brokers’

This study focused on the role of developers’ social networks and social capital — that is, the information and



This study focused on the role of developers' social networks and social capital — that is, the information and resources people gain through their social ties.

resources people gain through their social ties. In the research literature about social capital, “brokers” are people who are particularly well-positioned to obtain and share information across a social network.

They can bridge gaps in professional settings and knowledge and are therefore highly influential. Because brokers have the potential to shape other professionals’ social capital, they were a particular focus of this study.

The researchers explored how brokers gather knowledge, how they activate or share that knowledge, and how they influence professional learning offerings. They drew on data from a larger study that used interviews and surveys to look at the range of math and science professional learning opportunities available to teachers in a large U.S. metropolitan area.

They defined professional learning providers broadly to include anyone involved in planning and leading teacher professional learning in the focus city and three surrounding counties. This study zeroed in on mathematics professional learning in particular.

METHODOLOGY: Mapping social networks

The first step of the study was to determine the population of professional learning providers in the area. To do so, researchers asked interviewees to identify others they should interview.

In the next phase, researchers asked participants to identify which of those providers they went to for collaboration or advice. From this, they created a map of the providers’ networks, which they could analyze to see who influenced

whom and how much. They found that the advice network of professional learning providers was “sparse,” meaning that there were limited ties among the providers.

Identifying brokers — people who connect two otherwise disconnected stakeholders — was the next step in the data analysis. Brokers were people who accessed information from many others and shared information with many others. They had the potential to be very influential, but were certain brokers more effective in actualizing that role? The study sought to answer that question.

The researchers grouped brokers by organization and sector (school district, nonprofit organization, government entity, etc.). Based on an established social networking framework, brokering activity was then divided into either

accessing activities related to obtaining or learning about information and resources or sharing activities related to transferring information and resources to others in their network.

The researchers also defined two categories of information that were received or shared: either substantive information about mathematics content, Common Core Standards, or best practice, or technical and logistical information related to the implementation of professional learning.

FINDINGS: Comparing district and external providers

When the researchers analyzed the type and amount of brokering that occurred across sectors, they found that brokers' organizational affiliations influenced how they engaged with others in the network.

Although they found brokers in every sector, the brokers used this position differently. Specifically, brokers who worked outside of school districts — such as for universities or nonprofits — were more likely to both access and share substantive information.

Those who worked for school districts did not take advantage of their positions in the same way nondistrict brokers did. They "more often sought or shared logistical information dealing with the technical details of planning and delivering PD — details like budgets, planning for teachers release days, and support navigating district bureaucracy" (p. 22).

The researchers report patterns in the data showing that district providers more frequently experience a disconnect between the information they gather and the information they share than providers from other sectors.

District brokers accessed information about both content and logistics, but tended to share more logistical information than content information, thus limiting their influence in shaping the content of professional learning. The researchers conclude that district brokers could do more to activate their social capital in order to influence and guide the content and substantive information that is shared via professional development.

The authors argue that this pattern means nondistrict brokers such as university faculty and nonprofit organizations have more of an influence over which ideas and understandings are shared, impacting the design and content of professional learning. That could affect how different types of providers address the **Learning Designs** standard for professional learning —



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and, therefore, what teachers are able to access and learn.

Yet, these differences across sectors are, in some respects, understandable. District-based professional learning providers are often responsible for coordinating and scheduling external providers, leading to a greater load in terms of logistical concerns such as budget and substitutes for teachers. Nondistrict providers are generally free of this kind of pressure, perhaps allowing them more time to focus on content.

It could also be argued that the researchers' definition of logistical information was somewhat misleading. Topics included aligning professional learning with current initiatives such as technology or teacher leadership programs, which are actually quite substantive in terms of overall design of a school's professional learning opportunities.

QUALITATIVE DATA:

Providers in different roles

To further understand the difference between district and nondistrict brokers, the researchers also examined qualitative interview data. The study contrasts quotations about district providers and external providers to illustrate the difference in the way each group accesses and shares knowledge.

For instance, a quote about a district provider indicates that someone in her network went to her for logistical information only, while another quote about a university-based provider showed that an educator received mainly content information and support from that provider.

The qualitative findings are less clearly divergent than the network analysis findings and, in some cases, could be open to a different interpretation. For instance, the quote that is supposed to indicate a lack of

content also says, "She knows a lot about math, math education, PD, and I would say that mostly what I turn to her for is knowledge of our district, who's who, who does what ..." (p. 24).

The interview excerpts are valuable in part because they highlight as much about the intent or immediate need of the advice seeker (or even the setting of the interaction) as about the provider's actions. For instance, the quote illustrating what a university-based provider shares seems to take place at a conference dedicated to Common Core math tasks and resources.

It would be interesting to be able to look at more of the qualitative interview data to get a deeper understanding of the contexts and settings. We can imagine logistical and practical information being shared, but only after an understanding of challenges related to content and pedagogy, which would not come through clearly in a short quotation.

Similarly, a focused interaction at a conference about a particular task would not include logistical content, although that would clearly be part of the next steps or implementation. It is important for providers to contextualize the information they share — for instance, being explicit about the foundation of knowledge on which a particular professional learning opportunity is based, even if the focus of the interaction is primarily logistical.

Such a strategy could broaden the content of interactions and potentially also grow a provider's network, leading to increased influence.

PUTTING THE FINDINGS INTO PRACTICE

This study draws attention to the critical nature of decision-makers, professional learning providers, and brokers in implementing policies such as new content standards. It also raises important thought-provoking questions

about the nature and expectations of different organizational settings in terms of who provides what expertise and content knowledge. The patterns found in the study have potential implications for how well providers from different sectors fulfill Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning.

One of the main findings of this paper is that district-based brokers have less influence over the knowledge that teachers can access in professional development settings because of a focus on logistical issues. This speaks directly to Learning Forward's **Implementation** standard, which emphasizes the need to ensure that well-designed professional learning opportunities are effectively reaching educators.

It suggests room for growth in terms of how district-based providers are sharing their own content expertise and what they are learning as they develop and design professional learning experiences.

This also highlights the need for more substantive conversations about implementation of policies and effective professional learning practices within the district professional learning network, as well as potential partnerships between internal and external providers.

There is a lot to unpack in this study and its findings. We would like to hear from the Learning Forward community about the ideas and methods. Have you used network analysis strategies in your work? How deliberately do you think about the content of your interactions as you move through your networks and share information in your partnerships? How can Learning Forward support you in this regard? ■

ESSENTIALS

LICENSURE POLICY

Rethinking Relicensure: Promoting Professional Learning Through Teacher Licensure Policies

New America, August 2018

New America examined whether and how teacher licensure requirements in the U.S. encourage meaningful professional learning. Looking across all 50 states, they discovered that the short answer is no. Most policies failed to encourage learning that is relevant, sustained, or job-embedded. Furthermore, they tended to emphasize "seat time" and failed to examine whether teachers actually learned or changed their practice.

Overall, the report finds that states are "squandering a great opportunity" to promote effective professional learning and student growth, but it did find bright spots in a few states and makes recommendations for improving relicensure policies.



www.newamerica.org/education-policy/policy-papers/rethinking-relicensure/

TEACHER SHORTAGES

Taking the Long View:

State Efforts to Solve Teacher Shortages by Strengthening the Profession

Learning Policy Institute,

August 29, 2018

Strengthening the education workforce is key to addressing teacher shortages, according to this report from the Learning Policy Institute.

It describes key strategies for doing that, including mentoring and induction programs for new teachers and leadership training for principals.



Examples of promising approaches are based on reviews of states' Every Student Succeeds Act plans, state policies, and administrative documents and data.

<http://bit.ly/2NgIJEA>

MENTORS AND STUDENT TEACHERS

Mentors matter:

Good teaching really can be passed down to student teachers, new research finds

Chalkbeat, July 16, 2018

Education reporter Matt Barnum highlights three recent studies that found the quality of mentoring during student teaching placements matters for teachers' development.

When student teachers had mentors who were highly rated on observational assessments, they went on to be rated higher once they had their own classrooms.



That might seem like common sense, but teaching quality isn't always taken into account when assigning mentors. And the studies find that a commonly used criterion for selecting mentors — years of classroom experience — did not correlate with student teachers' learning or later success.

According to Barnum, "The findings offer a commonsense prescription: Invest in finding the most effective possible teachers to supervise their trainees."

<http://bit.ly/2CoTKOI>

AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

PDK Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools

PDK International, 2018

The PDK Poll has been surveying Americans about their perceptions of U.S. schools since 1969. This year, PDK looks back on the 50 years of polling data to document not just current attitudes but trends over time.



One of this year's key findings is that two-thirds of Americans believe teachers are underpaid and 78% would support a teacher strike in their community. Most survey respondents have confidence in teachers, but a majority say they would discourage their children from becoming teachers.

<http://pdkpoll.org/results>

Inform. Engage. Immerse.

FOCUS

EQUITY



GUEST EDITORS TACKLE THIS ISSUE'S COMPLEX TOPIC

For this issue of *The Learning Professional*, Learning Forward invited **Jill Harrison Berg**, left, and **Sonia Caus Gleason**, right, to serve as editors for the following section dedicated to equity. Education experts with a long-standing commitment to equity and social justice, Berg and Gleason have unique perspectives that span public schools, higher education, philanthropy, and beyond. They have assembled a collection of articles from powerful and field-leading voices about the role of professional learning in building more equitable schools. As Berg and Gleason point out in their introductory article on p. 24, "School-based educators — including both administrators and teachers — have a uniquely indispensable role that only they can play in advancing equity."

"COME
TOGETHER
FOR EQUITY"

p. 24

COME TOGETHER FOR **EQUITY**

REWORK BELIEFS, ACTIONS, AND SYSTEMS
THROUGH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

BY JILL HARRISON BERG AND SONIA CAUS GLEASON

The word “equity” is found throughout U.S. schools today — in district mission statements, school vision documents, and classroom posters. It is used to signify a value that feels fundamental to our democracy and public education system: Students’ educational outcomes should not be determined by their demographics, including race, ZIP code, primary language, gender, and/or disability. Yet equity can feel elusive in practice.

Education stakeholders who aim to advance equity in practice might approach this work from different fronts. Policymakers and district administrators might focus on providing all students with access to

quality educational resources, including high-quality school facilities, teachers, curriculum and instructional materials.

Local agencies and school partners might concern themselves with improving all students’ readiness to learn, for example, by addressing disparities in health care, post-natal services, early childhood education, physical and mental health services, and parent education.

But school-based educators — including both administrators and teachers — have a uniquely indispensable role that only they can play in advancing equity.

This is because, regardless of whether schools have managed to secure quality educational resources or

receive students who are ready to learn, it is the job of educators to identify the unique starting place of each student and make instructional decisions that will take students to where they need to be, all while cultivating their individual passions and talents.

Doing this well requires ongoing inquiry of one’s own beliefs, an ever-expanding repertoire of professional practices, and constant collaboration to develop student-centered systems. It requires a strategic approach to professional learning.

There is no more important time to commit to investing in professional learning for equity. On issues of race, where national disparities persist, we have a particular responsibility for

sustained dialogue and action. This historic reality converges with this moment in time, in which we are experiencing an uptick in public acts of racism (Anti-Defamation League, 2017; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2018).

Educators have a unique and essential role to play in growing a generation of citizens equipped to think critically; act with truth, kindness, confidence, and tact; and transform the systems that reinforce inequity.

THREE DIMENSIONS OF EQUITY

At its best, professional learning for equity supports educators to attend simultaneously to three dimensions: beliefs, actions, and systems.

BELIEFS

The deep-seated beliefs and assumptions we develop are comfortable to us, and we depend on them to keep us psychologically safe. We resist changing them, and yet it is impossible to improve actions in lasting ways without first exploring these underlying beliefs.

Because we are both participants in and producers of inequitable systems in ways we may not even realize, a commitment to advancing equity requires us to keep revisiting our beliefs and continually question how we may be stopping short of the belief that all students can learn, as evidenced in our actions.

ACTIONS

Teaching is complex work, requiring teachers to make hundreds of decisions every hour. We manage

this complexity by developing routines. Having these routines allows some of our actions to run on autopilot, which is helpful as it frees part of our minds and bodies for decisions that require more of our attention.

On the other hand, relying on routines reinforces patterns of behavior, at the individual and collective level, until we no longer question our actions, even when we should. A commitment to advancing equity means that we bring our actions in line with our belief that all students can learn. When we change our actions, we recognize ways in which our systems, designed for outdated actions, also need to be reconfigured.

SYSTEMS

Systems are made up of interconnected beliefs, practices, people, organizations, policies, and structures. Our beliefs about what is possible and the actions we choose to take can feel as though they are limited by existing systems, which have longstanding inequities built into them. Ironically, the same beliefs and actions that are constrained by these systems have helped to shape them. It makes sense, then, that while we're working individually and collectively on our beliefs and actions, we are compelled to take action to transform these systems.

Ideally, educators can develop these three interdependent dimensions with intentionality and in concert. If we expand only what we believe, the existing system will limit what we are able to do and leave us frustrated. If we change only what we do, our beliefs will continue (consciously or

not) to reinforce existing systems and limit the effectiveness of our actions. Changing only our systems is equally futile, as what we do in those systems will be shaped by stagnant beliefs and habits, and thus result in no real change. Efforts to expand or change one dimension can only be lasting in the context of congruous changes in the others over time.

STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Educators concerned with designing professional learning for equity might wonder where and how all three of these dimensions of learning might happen, given the limited time and resources in schools.

In fact, these interdependent dimensions can be developed across multiple professional learning contexts, from independent inquiry to team learning to whole-school professional learning (Gleason & Gerzon, 2013). Thus, while educators may need to establish some new routines, schools can also gain ground by applying or sharpening the equity focus across existing routines. The following examples illustrate how the three dimensions of learning may look in action throughout the school.

Beliefs: To expand thinking about beliefs, educators may independently interview students and their families and check their assumptions against what they've learned. Educators may also form their own critical friendships for exploring how personal biases are playing out in and out of the classroom.

Within school teams, educators

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR EQUITY: 3 DIMENSIONS OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR EQUITY

BELIEFS:

MINDSETS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Educators might pursue the following objectives ...

On their own:

- Examine **personal beliefs and biases**; develop skills to explore and question them.
- Learn about **students** (race, class, culture interests, learning modes, etc.), their families and neighborhoods; engage them as partners in improving teaching and learning.
- Examine one's own **relationships**; broaden them.

In teams:

- Set and communicate **high, specific expectations**; share collective accountability for them.
- Share **knowledge about shared students** to support colleagues in expanding their view of a student beyond their own classroom; collaborate to understand how cultural considerations affect how individuals and groups of students respond to instructional and assessment contexts.
- Build trust and **authentic relationships** with team colleagues and families; recognize and maximize benefits of diverse backgrounds and work styles.

As a whole school:

- Study **how trust is built** and its important role in relationships (with colleagues, students, and families); take action to strengthen relationships.
- Explore how **existing school and district norms and culture** promote and inhibit equity within the school district and with families in the broader community.
- Probe **the difference between multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching**; reflect on whether and how we're doing each.

ACTIONS:

PRACTICES AND ROUTINES

Educators might pursue the following objectives ...

On their own:

- Examine the impact of one's own professional **practices and routines** on student confidence and competence (in aggregate and for subgroups) and work to mediate any adverse impact.
- Build skills for productive, **difficult conversations**; communicate with truth and tact.
- Reflect on **power dynamics** and how they come into play at every level; recognize one's own power and amplify voices of those unheard.

In teams:

- Critically review the team's **curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices** to examine them for cultural bias, relevance, and rigor; revise or refresh curriculum plans and curriculum maps based on knowledge of students.
- Collaborate to recognize and attend to individual **student strengths and needs** and coordinate efforts to ensure each student receives what he or she needs.
- Engage in collaborative inquiry to investigate and **respond to patterns found in disaggregated schoolwide data**.

As a whole school:

- Collaborate to create agreements about new **schoolwide norms, communication routines, and/or events** that support relationship building (teacher to student, teacher to teacher, teacher to parent, teacher to administrator) and shape organizational culture.
- Engage in **schoolwide learning walks** or equity assessments to monitor progress toward equity goals and assist in identification of promising next steps.
- Collaborate to prepare to use new **instructional, curricular, and/or assessment practices** that have been selected to align with the needs and values of our students.

SYSTEMS:

POLICIES AND STRUCTURES

Educators might pursue the following objectives ...

On their own:

- Examine and reflect on **impact of local policies and structures on one's own students** in order to advocate for improvements.
- Learn to call out **institutional racism** and communicate effectively with those in power (or become the one in power).
- Strengthen one's own **instructional leadership skills** to be an asset for teacher-led professional learning that advances equity.

In teams:

- Critically examine **systems for evaluating and grading student work** and their effects on student motivation and outcomes; reform policies while including student and family voices.
- Investigate the effectiveness of **school communications policies and structures**; propose improvements that meet the needs and values of families.
- Review **family engagement** data with families and establish new systems for engagement.

As a whole school:

- Analyze students' access to opportunity with regard to **scheduling, class/teacher assignment policies, and special programs**, and redesign systems to improve equity of access.
- Look at data to critically examine **student attendance, behavior, and retention policies**; create cross-stakeholder team to reform and monitor them.
- Engage in (internal or external) **equity audits** to monitor and inspire progress toward equity goals.

might share student work to support each other to bolster authentic knowledge of students as well as to norm assumptions about high expectations. Team members might also examine the dynamics of their relationships within the team as a way to push on assumptions about others.

In a schoolwide context, a faculty may invest in deepening its knowledge about concepts of culture, equity, and trust, and reflect together with honesty about how each is experienced in the community.

Actions: There are many lines of inquiry educators can pursue on their own to expand their actions. They can, for example, experiment with new classroom routines to strengthen student confidence and competence and solicit student feedback to ensure they are working. They also can hone their confidence and competence for engaging in difficult conversations with truth and tact so that they can speak up in the face of inequity.

When educators work in teams, they can engage in professional learning that retools individual and collective action. For example, they might rethink and redesign schoolwide curriculum traditions, instructional expectations, or assessment routines. They might support each other in honing practices targeted at identified achievement gaps through collaborative inquiry.

At the same time, faculty can take action in schoolwide professional learning. While the faculty might devise and institute new routines to improve how adults across a school engage with one another as well as with students, families, and partners, it might also create traditions that help them monitor and celebrate progress toward equity goals.

Systems: To focus on systems, educators can work independently to become knowledgeable about relevant policies and structures. Individuals

may, for example, study the influence of institutional racism on policies at the school or district level and propose solutions to those in power.

Team professional learning may attend to systems change by critically examining and revising schedules to give students access and supports of those best equipped to do so. Teams of educators, together with family and community members, might also research and propose more equitable grading routines, assessment systems, and student retention policies.

Similarly, at the school level, the role of transportation, student assignment, and resource allocation might become the subject of a study team and a plan of action. All of these systems changes lie beyond what a team or faculty can typically address in its regular meetings. Institutional changes such as these seem intractable, but with protected time for analysis, problem solving, and advocacy, they are possible.

By considering the three dimensions across a range of professional learning contexts, educators can be strategic as they develop their professional learning plans for equity. They can power up existing learning experiences so that equity connections are more explicit and identify what is missing or unfocused so it can be further developed.

STAYING THE COURSE

Whether attending to beliefs, actions, or systems, professional conversations that seek to advance equity can be challenging. We must have a genuine curiosity to listen, eagerness to learn, and willingness to make ourselves vulnerable when we discuss equity and dimensions of diversity such as race, class, disability, and gender.

We can create conditions for success by creating a safe space with norms that establish shared expectations, secure agreement that missteps in

understanding and experience will be taken in stride, and affirm that our shared desire to advance equity will ground our interactions in mutual respect.

Obstacles such as local politics, competing priorities or factions, wavering leadership, and leadership transitions can threaten this work. These obstacles may create bumps in the road and stymie our coordinated approach, but we must stay on the path to take action individually and as communities.

We can do so fortified with knowledge about three key dimensions — beliefs, practices, and systems — that need to change and with ideas of what professional learning might look like when designed to advance equity.

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BEYOND RANDOM ACTS of EQUITY

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATION ABOUT TRANSFORMING SYSTEMIC CULTURE



Courageous Conversation *engages* those who won't talk, *sustains* the conversation when it gets uncomfortable or diverted, and *deepens* the conversation to the point where authentic understanding and meaningful actions can occur.



BY GLENN SINGLETON

Schools cannot achieve racial equity without explicit processes for leaders and staff to examine their personal, professional, and organizational beliefs about race. But in 25 years of working with schools and organizations in the United States and abroad, I have learned that educational systems are deeply challenged to examine their beliefs about racial equity.

This is especially true when those beliefs have been polished with the superficial and aspirational jargon of mission and vision statements. The language in these statements is revealing. For example, “broadening”—that is, shortening—the term “racial equity” to just “equity” reflects a paucity of knowledge, skill, and will to engage with race.

To systemically transform professional learning to integrate a racial equity lens, we need to address this paucity of dialogue about race. Courageous Conversation is a dialogic approach to doing so. It offers school

systems a protocol and strategy to exercise the passion, practice, and persistence necessary to examine systemic inequity. With these tools, educators can participate in interracial dialogue about race, develop racial understanding, and address racial issues in schools.

Specifically, Courageous Conversation *engages* those who won't talk, *sustains* the conversation when it gets uncomfortable or diverted, and *deepens* the conversation to the point where authentic understanding and meaningful actions can occur.

As schools engage in open and honest dialogue about racial achievement disparities, they can identify and effectively address obstacles to success that exist for all students. As noted leadership and management consultant Margaret Wheatley reminds us, “Human conversation is the most ancient and easiest way to cultivate the conditions for change—personal change, community, and organizational change.”

GOALS OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR EQUITY

Professional learning to foster systemic transformation for equity must address and facilitate practices that teach stakeholders at the board, central office, building, classroom, and community levels to:

- Develop the **SKILL** to talk about race;
- Acquire **KNOWLEDGE** of how race is constructed and understand its intersection with schooling;
- Build the **CAPACITY** to interrogate how systems operate to institutionalize beliefs about race; and
- Summon the **WILL** to interrupt systems that yield unwanted, racially predictable, and disproportionate results.

LESSONS FROM PARTNER DISTRICTS

In communities around the country and the world, we work with systemic partners to implement Courageous Conversation. Systemic partners are school districts in which leaders commit to using our tools to develop and use a racial equity lens to facilitate districtwide improvement and strategic planning.

This begins with racial equity professional learning at the executive levels of the district and then strategically moves to scale for schools, educators, families, and communities. The following are two examples of the systemic partners we have worked with.

St. Louis Park Public Schools is a small public school district in a first-tier suburb of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Serving 5,000 students, the district includes four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. We began our systemic partnership with the district in 2014 after conducting introductory racial equity training in the region to address stark racial disparities in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area.

Fort Worth Independent School District is a larger public school system, serving more than 86,000 students in 83 elementary schools, 29 middle schools and 6th-grade centers, 18 high schools, and 16 other campuses in Fort Worth, Texas. Our partnership with the Fort Worth district started in 2015 under the leadership of the superintendent and the board of education as part of a series of initiatives to redesign, transform, and revitalize the district.

We have learned valuable lessons from these partners and many others as they reflect on their context and engage in professional learning for racial equity. Three lessons in particular stand out about racial equity, identity politics, and cultural transformation in schools:

1. Race matters.
2. Leadership must lead.
3. Courageous Conversation is essential.

Here we illustrate each through the examples of St. Louis Park and Fort Worth.

Race matters.

The United States' unfortunate history of racism, as well as current racial disparities across every sector of society, point to a truth: Race matters. It matters in our beliefs about what every child should know and be able to do; our choices about how to structure and facilitate that learning; and how we treat one another.

Yet many education policy, programming, and practice guidelines fail to align with this reality. They don't create opportunities for leaders and teachers to acquire literacy and competence about race, racial impact, and systemic racism.

Although racial equity has emerged as a growing priority, schools struggle mightily to talk about race in a manner that is productive, insightful, and generative.

Some school districts are making progress, however. This progress begins with acknowledging how race matters and is affecting our schools and students.

In St. Louis Park Schools, the work using a racial equity approach began in response to a legal directive to desegregate Minneapolis-area schools. The city of Minneapolis and the state of Minnesota have long been challenged with desegregating schools and effectively serving students of color.

Judicial decisions in several high-profile court cases, including one in 2015, have targeted some specific practices to address those challenges. But according to Superintendent Astein Osei, the results have been far from clear, characterized by "gaps between

the official statements, plans, and actions." Furthermore, he says, many educators have approached the resulting professional learning as a requirement to check off in order to meet a legal mandate, rather than an opportunity for transformation.

In Fort Worth Independent School District, work toward racial equity began with data, which showed that African-American and second language learners consistently scored far below their white counterparts. The pattern seemed independent of family income — African-American students identified as non-economically disadvantaged scored lower than disadvantaged white students.

Sherry Breed, chief of equity and excellence for the district, said, "This reality confirmed that it was necessary for us to begin a conversation about race."

Systemic transformation for racial equity is not merely a statistical exercise or response to external pressures, however. It must be grounded in intentional efforts to create and sustain a culture and climate in which all stakeholders, especially traditionally marginalized black, brown and indigenous employees, students, and communities discover and produce through their most empowered selves. This requires that all stakeholders acknowledge the omnipresent role of race in all aspects of schooling.

Leadership must lead.

Systemic equity transformation requires a shift in the organizational culture and climate of school systems and schools. That shift must flow from the highest-ranking leadership to and between staff in all divisions of the district.

Achieving racial equity in education is an unapologetically top-down process. Boards of education, superintendents, and school leadership

executives must take the lead and responsibility for transformation processes in their communities. When they discuss how racial belief and bias yield racial disparities, they authorize the system at large to engage in the same development process to acquire new understanding and translate it into effective practice.

Without true commitment to racial equity work at the leadership level, districts and schools too often engage in “random acts of equity.” These event- and incident-driven piecemeal approaches are generally characterized by cultural day events, isolated book studies, emergency responses to racial incidents, and drive-by professional learning workshops. These activities do not engage educators in sustained and thoughtful understanding of their own status, that of their students, and the impact of race on their daily interactions.

In Fort Worth in 2016, four board trustees took the lead in starting a courageous and systemic approach to racial equity. They created a racial equity committee, comprised of parents, community members, higher education leaders, and central office staff.

The committee’s work to engage the conversation about race subsequently led to the board’s approval of its first racial equity policy in February 2017. It also approved a five-year professional learning plan to examine the district’s beliefs, policies, practices. None of this work would have been possible without committed leadership.

In St. Louis Park, leadership came from a different source. In fact, Superintendent Osei said, “While the school board did not impose any barriers to this kind of professional development, neither was there outright and unquestionable support for racial equity work.”

However, some district leaders

stepped up and assumed responsibility for moving the work forward.

“Although not policymakers, [these leaders] gained influence and built relationships in the district,” Osei said. As a result, they implemented a district leadership team meeting four times a year to work on specific problems.

However, this example also demonstrates the challenge of engaging a critical mass of leaders. Key decision-makers were missing from almost every meeting, according to Osei, and “as a result, there was a disconnect between goals and action plans designed by the district team and the dissemination, discussion, or expectations around those plans once the team returned to the workplace.”

Courageous Conversation is essential.

Language is at the heart of a system’s culture. Consequently, the way to transform district and school culture is to transform the language that is used. But although racial disparities are often cited as strategic concerns, few people want to discuss race or are able to do so in a multiracial setting.

Given that relatively few school leaders have learned how to talk about race effectively, such a skill set must be honed and introduced into the district lexicon at strategic moments. Having a set of tools or a protocol in this process helps educators navigate the difficult terrain of interracial dialogue. A theory of action or framework is also important to help stakeholders arrive at and effectively act on their newfound understandings.

Although it is transformative in and of itself, simply talking about race effectively is insufficient. Courageous Conversation needs to fit within a larger framework aimed at total district, school, and classroom improvement. The Courageous Conversation framework provides three overlapping domains within which the dialogue

is guided: leadership, learning and teaching, and family/community engagement and empowerment.

“The Courageous Conversation framework for leadership development provided anchors for our district leaders’ beliefs about equity,” Osei said. The framework intentionally invited multiple racial perspectives from stakeholders inside and outside of the strategic plan core team.

Subsequently, the district created its 2016-17 professional learning plan to align with the performance targets for culturally relevant pedagogy and racial consciousness development for all employees.

A key component of the professional learning plans was the initiation of culturally relevant instructional coaching. This Courageous Conversation model to train and empower central office instructional coaches and leaders is a vehicle to take equity to greater scale in schools and districts. The equity-focused peer coaching model develops proficiency in applying the protocol as a central tool for effective facilitation, intervention, and coaching for racial equity.

The development of coaches at the central office level builds capacity and long-term sustainability for school and district equity transformation. Through support in examining their reflections, facilitated by skilled racial equity coaching, St. Louis Park teachers were able to uncover beliefs that guide practice.

Helping teachers understand how beliefs and feelings drive their actions and outcomes is critical in transforming student experience and achievement. This heightened level of consciousness from staff was an important departure from race-neutral and color-blind curriculum and instruction-driven notions about their own efficacy and that of their students of color.

**MAKING CHANGE
IN THE DISTRICTS**

The Courageous Conversation approach has helped initiate change in St. Louis Park and Fort Worth districts.

Fort Worth leaders have reported the following changes in practice:

- In February 2017, the district adopted its racial equity policy, which states in part: "The responsibility for addressing these disparities among students rests with the adults, not with the students."
- Two-thirds of campus principals have engaged in professional learning and identified supports based on campus needs.
- By examining math and literacy assessments and isolating race (one of six Courageous

Conversation protocol conditions), staff determined the level of supports necessary for the 2018-19 school year.

- Districtwide changes to curriculum include rewriting high school courses in African-American studies and Mexican-American studies and adding a middle school curriculum module in African-American studies.
- Equity walks, a strategy that engages principals in ongoing observation of and interaction with teachers, have contributed to evaluating district procedures and practices in the areas of special education and English language learners. In schools where principals regularly observed teaching and learning

through an equity lens, they were able to recommend adaptive changes, such as engaging more collaborative teacher action research observation and planning.

- Curriculum and instruction reflect the concepts that were presented in culturally relevant instructional coaching seminars. In every content area, teachers are now asked to plan according to the four R's: relationship, realness, relevance, and rigor.

In St. Louis Park, school records and surveys of students and staff show changes in student outcomes as well as in school practices:

- Teachers are increasingly demanding more racial equity coaching time as measured by district professional



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- development requests.
- Most principals are enrolled in an institute for courageous leadership.
- 2016-17 graduation results show black students graduating at a rate of 93%, which is 15% higher than the rate in 2013 and 10% higher than in 2015-16.
- 2016-17 graduation results show Latino students graduating at a rate of 90% compared to the state average of 66.3%. Achievement at this level has remained steady above the state average since 2015-16.
- According to student surveys, high percentages of students believe their teachers seek and value students' point of view (71%) and check frequently for understanding (74%).
- Even higher percentages report a sense of emotional

safety (87%) and a priority on persistence and rigor (89%).

Osei believes there is a connection between the persistence and rigor item and graduation and also points out that students report positive relationships with teachers. "In order to have relationships, staff must understand the impact of race and cultural relevance on student learning," he says. "Our work to engage in courageous conversations about race has helped to create the conditions for better staff/student relationships, therefore increasing students' ability to persist."

PUTTING EQUITY AT THE CENTER

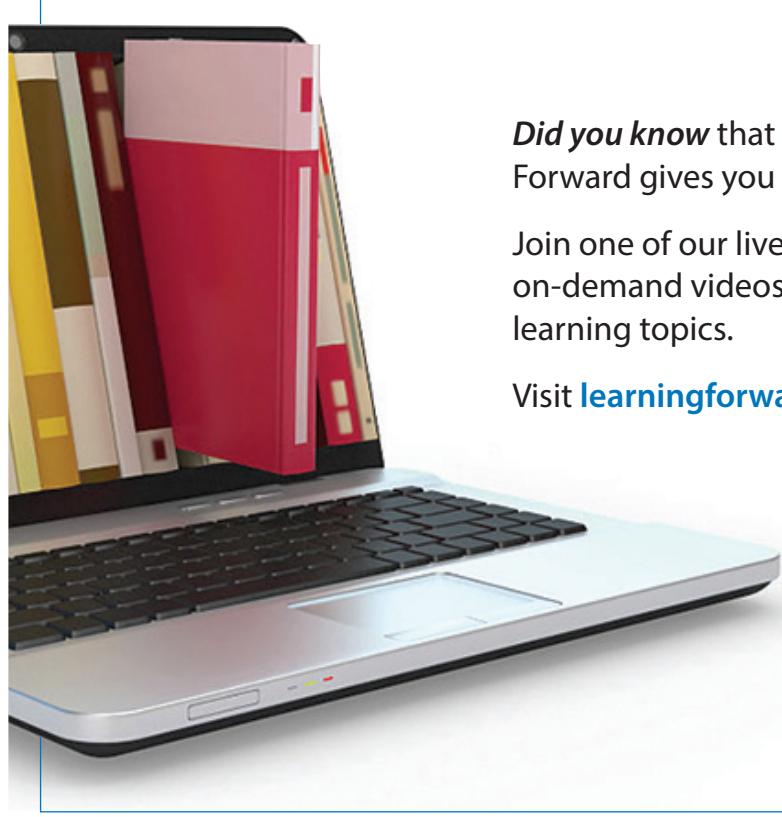
Equity is a mental model, a habit of mind, and a moral imperative to eliminate racial disparities in the experience and performance of all school system stakeholders.

This vital work does not correspond to the beginning or end of the school

day, nor is it limited to classroom practice, but must lie at the core of the personal, professional, and organizational belief of educators, educational institutions, and the communities they serve.

Courageous Conversation serves as a catalyst for fundamental dialogues about race and racism that must underlie systemic equity transformation in classrooms, schools, and districts. As business expert R. Spencer Darling has said, "All organizations are designed, intentionally or unwittingly, to achieve precisely the results they get." When we strive for racial equity, we must make the structures for achieving it intentional.

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STRONG TEAMS, STRONG RESULTS

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT HELPS
TEACHER TEAMS STRENGTHEN EQUITY

BY NANCY LOVE AND MICHELLE CROWELL

At a diverse elementary school, a grade-level planning team is meeting about an upcoming lesson and creating an exit ticket, a brief formative assessment tool to check for students'

understanding. School administrators have recently asked special educators and language development specialists to become part of the collaborative team.

As the group begins working on the exit ticket, one special education teacher expresses concern: "My students

couldn't do that. It's too hard for them. They will get discouraged."

Her teammate pushes back gently, "I think with modifications this assessment can work for all our kids. Let's see if we can modify the task to make it more accessible to your

Teams can strengthen courage, conviction, and cultural proficiency to make progress toward equity, one team meeting at a time.

students. We want all our students to hit the standard.”

Another teacher chimes in, “The modifications might work better for our English language learners, too.”

The team creates two versions of the assessment, and teachers choose which version to give to their own students. The following week, they analyze the results together and plan for reteaching and extension based on the results.

The special education teachers are elated to discover how well their students performed. “We just weren’t expecting enough of them,” one teacher reflected. “Our special education students are excited, too. They know they’re doing the same work as their classmates.”

ROLE OF TEACHER TEAMS

Sitting in our schools right now is one of the most powerful levers we have for deepening equity: teacher teams focused on developing collective expertise in high-leverage, equity-promoting practices.

One conversation at a time, teams like the one in the vignette above, a composite of teams we have observed over time, chip away at low expectations, racism, and cultural biases that have marginalized special

education students, English language learners, students of color, and others who have not traditionally been served well by schools.

While many schools have a general orientation toward equity and “all students achieving,” those values come to life when team members confront specific limiting beliefs about individual students in the context of their work together on formative assessment. Working together in this way, teams can strengthen courage, conviction, and cultural proficiency to make progress toward equity, one team meeting at a time.

This was the approach of the Madeline English School, a culturally and linguistically diverse K-8 school with 825 students in Everett, Massachusetts. For years, standardized test results at the school showed below-average growth. In particular, special education students’ and English language learners’ achievement was flat. Teachers examined assessment data, but it was often too little too late, occurring after the students who took the tests had moved on.

Then, in spring 2017, the school launched a partnership with Research for Better Teaching to implement data coaching, a yearlong professional

learning program sponsored by the Five District Partnership. The partnership is a network of urban districts in greater Boston, funded by the Massachusetts Network Initiative grant from New Venture Fund.

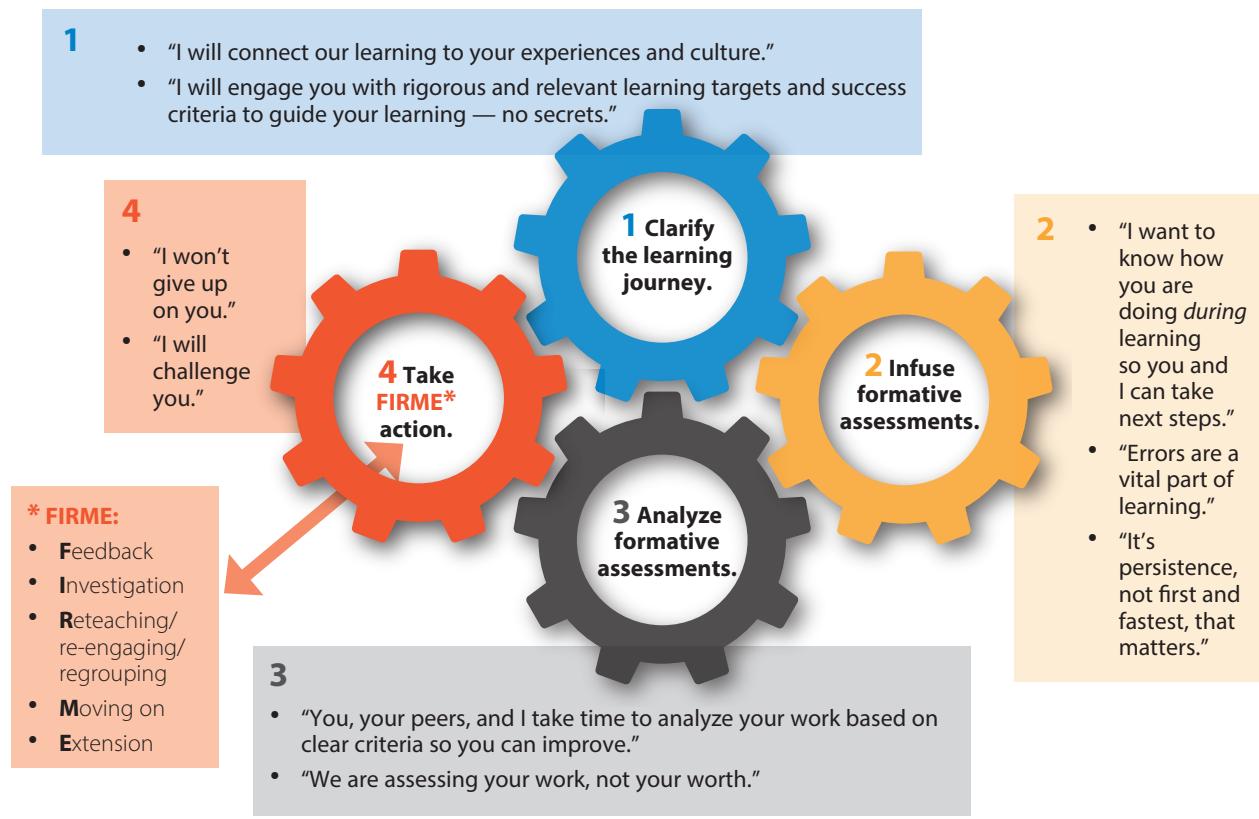
Over the course of a year, the school became committed to an equity-based approach to formative assessment and data-driven instruction.

Common planning time team meetings transformed from unproductive conversations to focused analysis of common exit tickets, careful planning for immediate next steps for reteaching and extension, and shared accountability for taking action in the classroom. The divide between special and general educators dissolved as teachers became collaborators in holding all students to high standards.

Special educators and language development specialists became regular contributors at team meetings, sharing strategies for reteaching, modifying standards-based exit tickets aligned with general education assessments, and analyzing student formative assessment results with their colleagues.

Mindsets shifted as teachers challenged each other and changed practices, and the school began to see positive impacts on students. On the

THE FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT FOR RESULTS CYCLE WITH HIGH-EXPECTATIONS MESSAGES



most recent diagnostic assessments, Grade 7 special education students' growth spurred, exceeding the targeted growth expectations by an average of 160% in reading and 44% in mathematics from the middle to the end of the academic year. Grade 4 special education students and English language learners exceeded targets by 21% in reading and 13% in mathematics.

The school's Five District Partnership Benchmark Assessments showed improvements in all grades for all students, with grade 7 making the greatest gains of almost 20 percentage points.

"The special education students are really benefiting from our team work," special educator Christine Downing said. "Before, they had this perception that they were dumb. Now they know that we are going to push them and that

they can push themselves."

What alchemy made this change happen? Four key ingredients were:

1. Professional learning for team leaders and administrators that is based in a practical framework with protocols for team learning and equity;
2. Thoughtful rollout;
3. A regular structure and schedule for team meetings; and
4. Consistent follow-through by school leaders.

A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FRAMEWORK FOR EQUITY

Data coaching is a team-based approach to helping schools use formative assessment data to drive short cycles of improvement. It is grounded in the knowledge that strengthening cultural proficiency is essential for making this process work.

"We have learned through our experience in the Using Data Process that issues of race/ethnicity, class, culture, gender, and other differences ... cannot and ... should not be avoided when examining data and engaging in collaborative inquiry. Our responses and reactions to these differences deeply affect how we interpret data and have a profound effect on student learning," say the authors of *The Data Coach's Guide to Improving Learning for All Students* (Love, Stiles, Mundry, & DiRanna, 2008, p. 92.)

The focus of professional learning in data coaching is on the Formative Assessment for Results Cycle (see diagram above), a framework to guide teacher teams in developing collective expertise in classroom formative assessment and the equity-promoting practices and messages that support its effective use.

TAKING FIRME ACTION		
Action in response to formative assessment	What it is	Why it matters for equity
FEEDBACK	Provide objective, descriptive information about students' performance relative to standards and success criteria.	Teams focused on equity learn about both effective practice and "wise feedback." "Wise feedback" (Cohen & Steele, 2002) helps combat stereotypes of intellectual inferiority among students of color by combining honest, direct feedback linked to standards alongside assurances that the student is capable and can improve performance.
INVESTIGATION	Examine student thinking in daily diagnostic questions and discussions.	In the words of math teacher Jessica Salem, "Now we ask our students to explain their thinking. Then I get to understand their thought process. They always have a reason. Once we understand, we can help them correct errors."
RETEACHING, RE-ENGAGING, REGROUPING	Use different approaches for students who need another opportunity to master a learning target.	Students with different learning needs and backgrounds do not all learn in the same way. Teams committed to equity collaborate to expand their teaching and grouping repertoires and make the best match for individual students.
MOVING ON	A legitimate step after the previous step when most, even if not all, students have achieved proficiency.	Equity means ensuring all students have access to a rigorous curriculum so the curriculum does not grind to a halt for one or two students. However, if some students have not mastered a concept or skill, it is important to have a plan for how they will do so.
EXTENSION	Provide additional challenges to students who master learning targets before others.	Extension ensures that all students are continually learning and stretching. "Now our students who reach a standard before others know they are going to be challenged," said reading coach Mary Beth Benedetto.

The cycle includes four steps. Embedded in each are high-expectations messages that teachers continually communicate to students both through their words and their actions so that students can internalize the growth mindset and their teacher's belief that they can succeed.

When teachers and students regularly experience this cycle and these messages, they chip away at limiting beliefs such as "mistakes are a sign of weakness," "speed counts," and "only the few bright can achieve at high levels" (Saphier, Haley-Speca, & Gower, 2018, p. 410).

Each step of the cycle requires that teachers are curious about and continually deepening their understanding of each of their students' cultures, experiences, and thinking while monitoring their own biases and assumptions.

Embedded in each step are high-expectations messages that teachers continually communicate to students.

The steps are:

1. Clarify the learning journey.

In this step, teachers focus and motivate learning by communicating specific success criteria to their students. Success criteria level the playing field by making explicit what success looks like through checklists, rubrics, and exemplars, so students don't have to guess what's on the teacher's mind — a phenomenon that tends to privilege students whose backgrounds are similar to teachers'. According to John Hattie's (2017) research, this kind of teacher clarity has a .75 effect size on student

outcomes. (For comparison, .4 represents a typical year of student growth.)

Also in this step, teachers gather information about students and their backgrounds through surveys, interviews, and one-on-one relationships with individual students so they can identify culturally relevant examples and metaphors and connect them to the content being taught.

2. Infuse formative assessments.

In this step, teachers weave formative assessments throughout instruction, using carefully crafted diagnostic questions that align with learning targets, assess success criteria, and surface gaps or errors in student thinking.

When teachers and students use assessments to make timely adjustments in teaching and learning tactics, they can effectively double the speed of

learning (Black & Wiliam, 2009). These assessments can take the form of quick quizzes, exit tickets, responses to writing prompts, or entries in science or math journals.

In grade-level teams, teachers work together to craft common diagnostic questions, road-test them with students, and bank those that worked well for future use. In vertical teams, assessments are not common but align with learning progressions within and between grades and thus are relevant for all teachers on the team.

In this step, teachers are mindful of creating diagnostic questions that are as free from racial, cultural, and socioeconomic biases (Popham, 2017) as possible.

3. Analyze formative assessments.

This step is about analyzing results frequently (ideally, daily or weekly). Individually, teachers might do this on the fly, quickly sorting student work to determine who's got it and who doesn't, and regrouping or reteaching accordingly. In a team, teachers use protocols to take a deeper dive into student work to determine whether the success criteria are met or not and plan for next instructional steps.

Understanding students' cultures comes into play in making accurate interpretations of the meaning of the data.

For example, one teacher team analyzed results of a mathematics assessment where students were asked to estimate the answer. The team was surprised to discover that, when disaggregating data by race, Asian students performed worse than other racial groups.

As they dug deeper, they discovered that these students had estimation skills, but they also had a cultural bias against estimating and favored computing accurately. Without honoring and addressing these students' assumptions,

teachers were not likely to help them improve.

4. Take FIRME action.

FIRME stands for five actions teachers can take in response to formative assessment results to improve instruction in ways that meet students' needs. (See table on p. 37 for more information.)

Together, the four steps of the Formative Assessment for Results Cycle and their embedded high-expectations messages achieve what John Hattie (2012) refers to as "visible learning" or "students' assessment capabilities" (p. 141), where students are clear about goals and success criteria, self-assess their progress, and take next steps in their learning, thus moving from dependent to independent, self-directed learners.

While important for all students, these practices are a vital for marginalized learners, who, Zaretta Hammond argues, need an ally to help "dependent learners begin and stay on the arduous path toward independent learners" (Hammond, 2015, p. 89).

STRUCTURES AND SUPPORT FOR SUCCESS

At Madeline English School, this work is supported by three additional key elements: thoughtful rollout, structures and schedules, and leadership team follow-through.

Thoughtful rollout. After engaging in learning about the Formative Assessment for Results Cycle, the school team needed to contextualize the professional learning to the school and, as one member said, focus on "what works for our building." They prioritized workshop content they would deliver to the whole staff.

The math and reading coaches and assistant principal then developed presentations in four chosen topic areas and delivered them starting in October during each grade-level

common planning time meeting. This was so successful that, by January, teachers at all grade levels confidently facilitated common planning time meetings themselves and followed data coaching protocols, with guidance and expertise provided by the reading and mathematics coaches.

Structures and schedules. For these efforts to work, teachers need dedicated and regular meeting times. Teachers meet by grade level once (grades K-2) or twice (grades 3-8) in an eight-day cycle and are joined by special educators, language development specialists, interventionists, and coaches. In grades 7-8, teachers meet in vertical teams by content area.

Leadership team follow-through. The leadership team went beyond creating structure and meeting schedules. They followed through with regular attendance at team meetings, classroom observations, and review of team documentation.

For example, math coach Howard Tuttman, reading coach Mary Beth Benedetto, and assistant principal Michelle Crowell visited classrooms daily to follow up on topics discussed during common planning time and celebrate successes of individual teachers and students.

In addition, all teacher teams shared formative assessments and results with Crowell and coaches through Google Classroom and Google Forms. This helped the leadership team track progress and teachers stay accountable to each other. Teachers appreciated the structure, schedule, and follow-up. As Tiffany Boakye, 4th-grade teacher, said, "Our administrators are the backbone that has made this successful. ... Because they are so passionate about it, they made us passionate about it."

A CLIMATE OF HIGH ACHIEVEMENT

At Madeline English School,

passion and persistence resulted in a climate of high achievement for all that permeates the school and is accompanied by encouraging test results, especially for special education students and English language learners.

With the right combination of professional learning on formative assessment practices and the structures and follow-through to support those practices, teacher teams are showing it is possible to create equity breakthroughs in as little as one year.

As reading coach Mary Beth Benedetto puts it, "The impact of our collaboration on equity has been huge. It used to be special education teachers and students felt isolated. Now all the teachers are thinking about all of our kids."

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CHECK OUT THESE BOOKS BY GUEST EDITORS OF OCTOBER'S THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

If principals and teacher leaders are not working with each other, they are working against each other. In this book, Jill Harrison Berg guides teams in establishing the relationships and routines needed for shared leadership, thereby building the capacity to accelerate learning for all students and adults.

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CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING PUTS **RIGOR** AT THE **CENTER**



Q&A WITH ZARETTA HAMMOND

Zarettta Hammond is a teacher educator, researcher, and consultant committed to supporting leaders, coaches, and teachers in integrating neuroscience with instruction, equity, and literacy. Her work is informed by her classroom experience, her time in organizations such as the National Equity Project, and her own research about how neuroscience and culture impact learning.

In her ongoing work with teachers, she has successfully supported educators throughout the country and beyond to develop culturally responsive habits of mind and instructional practices that support underprepared diverse students to lead their own learning.

Q: Your book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* (Corwin, 2015), introduces the “Ready for Rigor” approach to culturally responsive teaching. How is it unique?

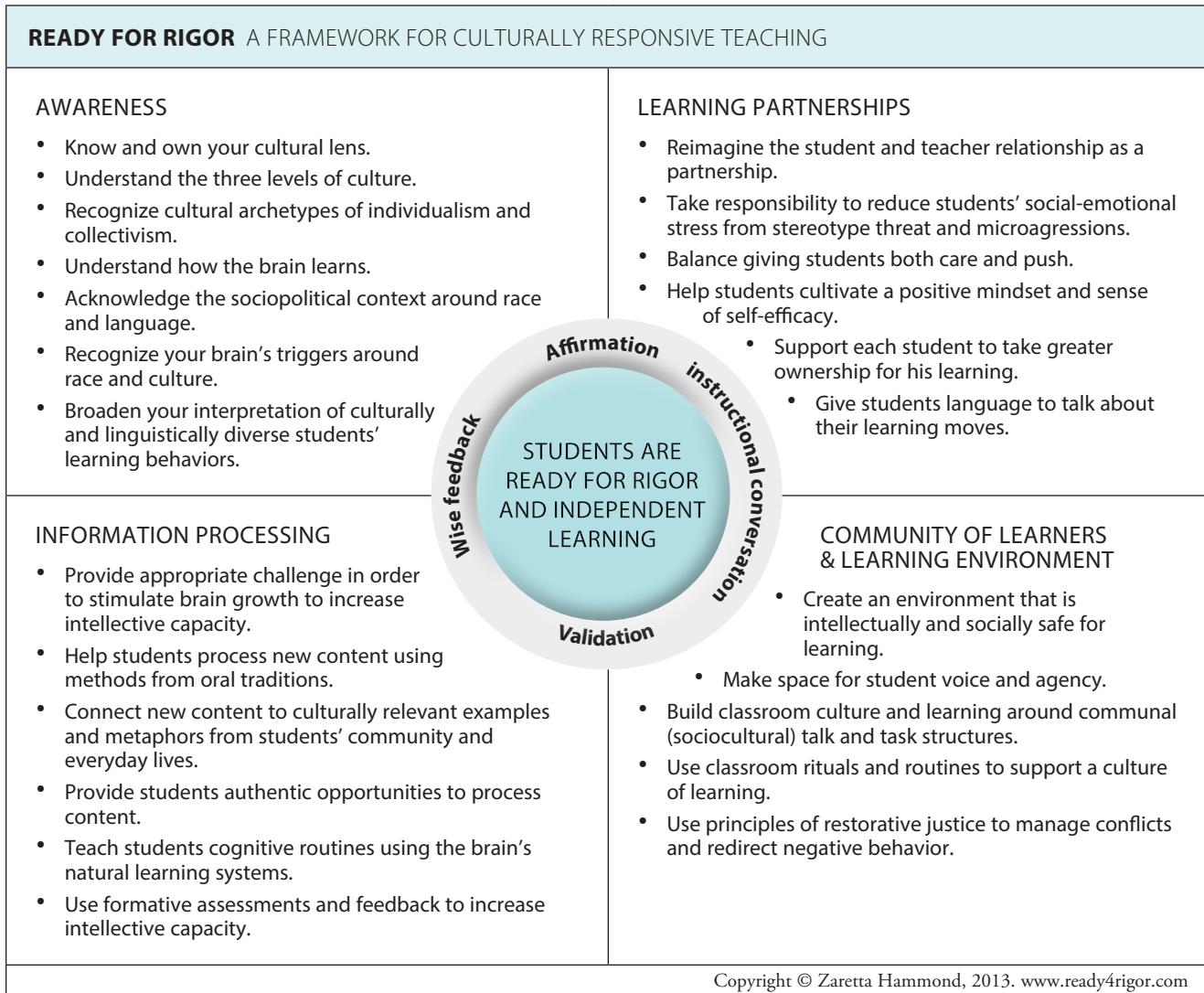
A: For a long time, nationally we have been trying to address gaps in learning outcomes between diverse students — namely, between black, Latino, Southeast Asian, English language learner, and low-income students and



Zarettta Hammond

their white and Asian counterparts.

When I began in education reform 20 years ago at the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative, schools were just beginning to routinely disaggregate data across racial groups and socioeconomic



status. A large part of that work was helping educators come to terms with the systems of oppression and bias that created chronic achievement and opportunity gaps.

Since then, educators have engaged regularly in courageous conversations to raise awareness of racial inequities in schools. More and more educators discuss implicit bias, white privilege,

and microaggressions at the school level. This is an important step.

Beyond this, though, it's essential to help teachers and leaders know what teaching and learning moves they should be making in schools to increase achievement and what acts of leadership facilitate and protect these efforts.

I see my work as helping schools that have done significant cultural

proficiency work go to the next phase of equity work: classroom and school implementation. The ultimate goal of culturally responsive teaching is to help students accelerate their learning by building cognitive learning muscles.

A growing body of research highlights this idea of "learnable intelligence." When we look at the causes of inequity related to instruction,

we see that diverse students aren't given the type of robust instruction early on that builds up their cognition. So they get to higher grades unable to carry the cognitive load.

We see a disproportionate number of struggling, underserved students of color and poor students who can't engage in higher-order thinking or read on grade level. That's not because they are not capable. It's the result of "inequity by design" — we aren't giving them the same learning opportunities as their peers.

To address that, it's not about remediation, but about bringing powerful teaching to underserved populations early on so they have the tools and opportunities to build their brainpower and learning muscles.

The Ready for Rigor framework codifies four core areas we have to synthesize and braid together to help students become leaders of their own learning. These areas are awareness, learning partnerships, information processing capacity, and learning communities and environments. (See p. 41.)

Integrating these pieces involves creating new routines, processes, and structures in classrooms around how we engage students in conversation, give feedback, and provide affirmation and validation.

Q: Schools and districts throughout the U.S. have used the book to inform their work on equity and supporting all students. What professional learning designs are educators employing?

A: I think the most powerful professional learning design (although not the only valuable one) for implementing culturally responsive teaching is a collaborative inquiry process. In collaborative inquiry, teachers work together to identify

When we improve the basic mental operations for processing information, we increase our capacity to take on more rigorous learning.

common challenges related to the achievement gap, test instructional approaches that use cultural learning tools based on the framework, and analyze relevant data to determine if these practices are helping students.

When trying to help students improve their learning using culturally responsive practices, this approach offers a systematic, collective process so teachers build shared language and shared understanding of what works. In collaborative inquiry for culturally responsive teaching, the focus isn't on implementing strategies per se, but in mastering how to get a student to improve her "learning moves" leading to deeper learning.

Too often, teachers think the magic is in the strategy and don't focus on helping the student become a more confident, independent learner. When using collaborative inquiry for culturally responsive teaching, the focus is on the learner. Because only the learner learns.

Collaborative inquiry provides a space for teachers to come together to honestly examine how to help diverse, struggling students carry more of the cognitive load during instruction. "Cognitive load" relates to the amount of information that our working memory can hold at one time as it is solving a problem or working through a complex task.

When we improve the basic mental operations for processing information, we increase our capacity to take on more rigorous learning. For example, some teachers use Harvard's Project Zero's seven studio "habits," which are

really mental steps for analyzing a task. Some schools use "thinking routines" as a way to get students to process more effectively.

The more a student independently uses these routines, over time he can process more content with less effort. This results in him being able to engage in more academic conversations or depending less on the teacher for help with each step.

There are a variety of ways educators are integrating elements of the Ready for Rigor framework. For example, the work at Roots International Middle School in Oakland Unified School District in California is powerful. Roots International serves high-poverty communities in East Oakland, home to African-American, Latino, Cambodian, and Pacific Islander families.

Under the direction of principal Geoff Vu, the faculty have focused methodically on understanding how to help students carry more of the cognitive load by using the "ignite, chunk, chew, and review" process embedded in Ready for Rigor. As part of the "chunking" element to create more cognitive connections between students' everyday lives and the content, they've been innovative in combining elements of ethnic studies, social justice education, and popular media.

For example, one history teacher used *Underground*, a popular TV show about the pre-Civil War period, to build several social studies units. Students then created historical fan fiction based on the units' lesson to teach writing skills and help students process their understanding of the concepts, motivations, facts, and events of the era.

Teachers in geography, science, and math are also finding ways to innovate. It's not perfect yet, but very promising.

I am also seeing promising efforts to integrate Ready for Rigor with existing frameworks and curricular approaches.

In the Boston Public Schools, leaders were able to integrate some of the core design principles from the Ready for Rigor frame into what they call their Essentials of Instructional Equity. They focused on creating shared language around core concepts and design principles that help students accelerate learning.

In California, Alameda County Office of Education is integrating Ready for Rigor into a course of study for educators that uses arts-integrated education methodologies from Harvard's Project Zero.

They have revolutionized the training of coaches who lead the courses for educators so that culturally responsive teaching is part of their larger work, not separated from it.

Q: This work is challenging. It requires educators to be ready and willing to rethink their beliefs, their actions, and the systems in which they work. What are some of the ways you recommend schools address the challenges to make culturally responsive teaching feasible?

A: This work is challenging for many schools because it requires that we coordinate several elements in four key areas of practice. The elements of the Ready for Rigor frame are most powerful when they act in unison. But too many schools are tempted to oversimplify culturally responsive teaching for an easy, quick rollout.

Schools fall into the trap of trying to find a few turnkey strategies that they label culturally responsive without ever engaging the student. If we don't give the student new language for talking about his learning and how he goes about improving it, then we won't see achievement scores improve.

Leaders too often promote culturally responsive teaching as a "thing" rather than as an approach

Unfortunately, there is a real danger of culturally responsive teaching going the way of growth mindset a few years ago.

that coordinates and integrates four macro-level areas outlined in the Ready for Rigor framework and a number of micro-level moves.

I see often where leaders make it a technical treatment for students of color rather than promote culturally responsive teaching as an adaptive challenge that requires change in how educators think about and do their work in partnership with students as learners.

The biggest trap is letting a sense of urgency lead to poor implementation. I see districts that are forming book study groups, asking teachers to pick a few actionable practices, and then expecting successful, widespread implementation when there's no capacity to support teachers and no quality control. There is a set of conditions that leaders need to put in place to execute equity by design.

Unfortunately, there is a real danger of culturally responsive teaching going the way of growth mindset a few years ago — people extract one element, oversimplify or misinterpret it, and then misapply it. Growth mindset's originator, Carol Dweck, had to come out and try to set the record straight.

I am hoping to encourage and support school districts to be more deliberate in building capacity thoroughly first — get small now to go big later, so you'll have real impact on student learning. Otherwise, schools can end up feeding achievement gaps, rather than closing them.

Q: Ideally, schools commit to this work in a systemic way. But getting everyone on board doesn't happen

easily. Where can individuals start at classroom, school, and district levels?

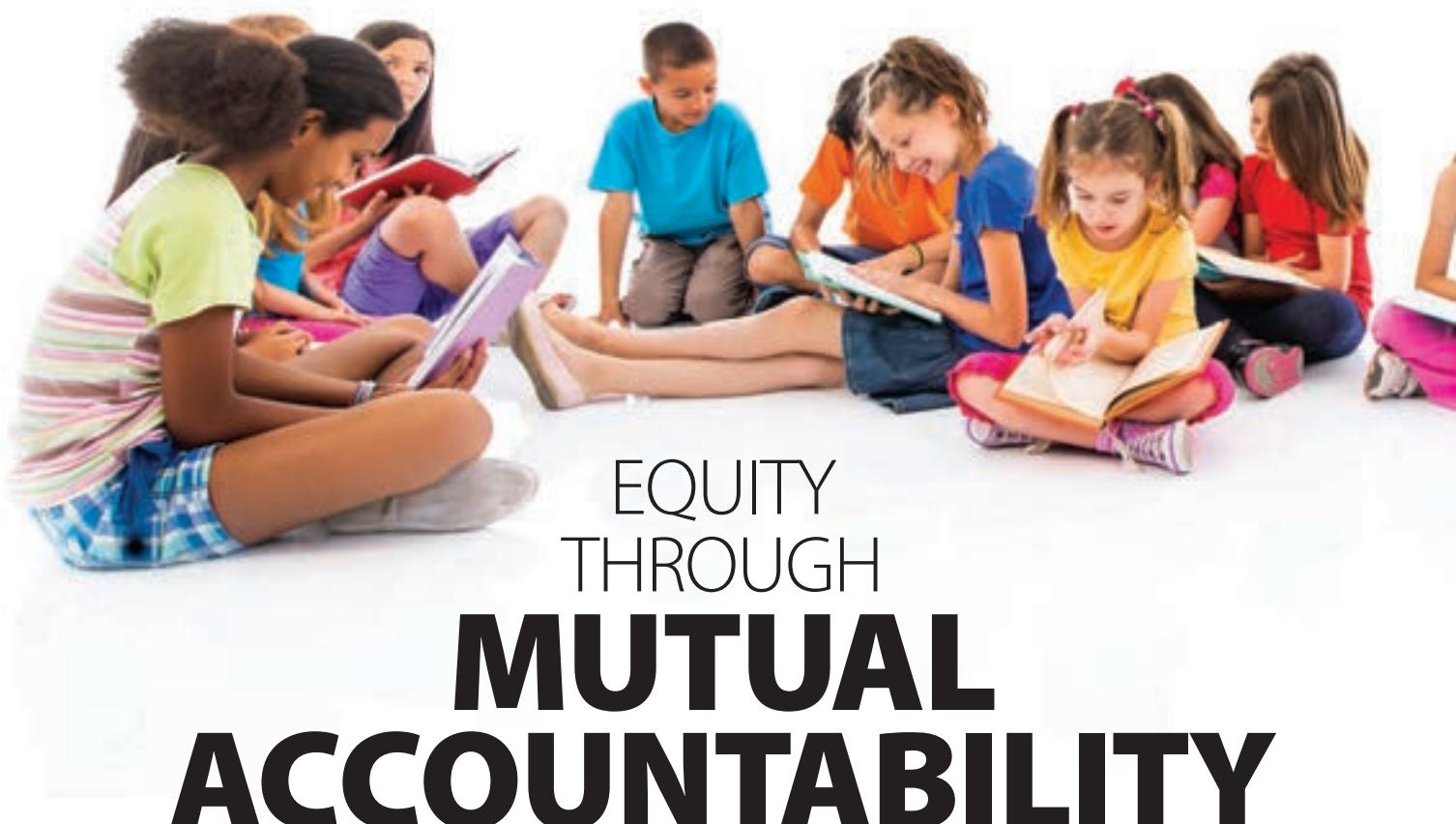
A: The beauty of culturally responsive teaching is that it doesn't require any special equipment. Any teacher who desires to improve the learning capacity of students can begin by assessing current practices in the four areas of the Ready for Rigor framework, determining what's missing, and using collaborative inquiry to make changes.

Helping underserved, struggling students develop the language and opportunity to talk about their process as learners can lead to students feeling more intellectually safe in the classroom and feeling that they have greater agency over their learning.

You have to begin small with your teacher leaders, building their skill and capacity by using their classrooms as lab classrooms, where they master their skills in moving struggling learners from dependent to independent learning over the course of a semester. You support those teacher leaders to become peer coaches to a new cohort of teachers within the school.

Coaching is beneficial so there is observation of new practices and educators can help one another overcome specific challenges. It is also essential to have a schedule that allows teachers to collaborate and make classroom time for a deeper engagement with students.

When you put all these pieces in place, over time you have shifted both the culture of the adult learning community and the instructional power of faculty. Unfortunately, you can't book study your way to being a culturally responsive school. But when done correctly, culturally responsive teaching can be a game changer for accelerating student learning. ■



EQUITY THROUGH **MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

COLLECTIVE CAPACITY BUILDING HELPS EDUCATORS ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS

BY JOAQUIN NOGUERA AND PEDRO NOGUERA

Today, over half of students served in our nation's public schools are students of color, and over half of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch (Rich, 2015). Because of the persistence of race and class segregation in housing patterns and a lack of willingness to implement past court orders for school desegregation (Rothstein, 2017), many schools are characterized by hypersegregation by both race and class (Orfield, Ee, Frankenberg, & Siegel-Hawley, 2016).

Moreover, in much of the country, the most disadvantaged children are most likely to attend underfunded schools (U.S. Commission on Civil

Rights, 2018). They also typically obtain the lowest test scores, graduation rates, and, in many cases, are more likely to be subjected to punitive forms of discipline. Too often, the services needed to address their health, nutrition, social, psychological, and emotional needs are either inadequate or elusive.

These unmet social needs invariably have a negative impact on academic performance (Ladd, 2012). For too long, state and federal policy has assumed that achievement gaps could close without addressing such glaring gaps in educational opportunity.

We may now be approaching a moment when there is greater willingness in many schools to address

some of these core equity issues and an opening for doing so.

The adoption of ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) in 2017 and, with it, a reduction in state testing requirements bring a new phase of reform, enabling districts and states to take a new approach to accountability, one that opens new possibilities for pursuing equity in new ways.

One of those ways is shifting from *top-down* accountability, in which schools and educators are subject to various mandates and pressures to improve, to *mutual forms of accountability* (Quinn & Fullan, 2015), wherein schools and districts address equity challenges collaboratively. Rather than relying on scrutiny and pressure,



they are engaged in *professional and institutional capacity building* to drive their equity goals.

Mutual accountability calls for each stakeholder — students, teachers, parents, and administrators — to work collaboratively in pursuit of educational goals. As we show in the pages ahead, such an approach is essential for pursuing equity because it makes it possible to avoid debates about blame when implementing strategies to address the needs of all students.

We present here two cases of this new approach to accountability: a school and a district in which collective capacity building helps teachers and schools become more accountable to each other and more effective in addressing the academic and social needs of all students.

The two cases are important because they illustrate how mutual accountability plays out at different institutional levels: the classroom and school site, and the district central office.

Though the dynamics at play are different, the goals — meeting the academic and social needs of all students — are similar and can be illuminating to educators.

PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING: FOCUS ON THE WHOLE CHILD

Schools generally reflect and embody the inequities present in society. Given that our society remains deeply stratified by race and class, it is hardly surprising that most schools reflect these patterns. But what would happen if a school were designed to

meet the social-emotional and academic needs of low-income students of color.

The school provides a broader array of supports than a traditional school, including the arts, social supports, and enriched learning opportunities in English and Spanish. In addition to

Because of the persistence of race and class segregation in housing patterns and a lack of willingness to implement past court orders for school desegregation (Rothstein, 2017), many schools are characterized by hypersegregation by both race and class.

explicitly counter racial inequality and injustice? In such a school, is it possible for educators to enact strategies that interrupt and counter the various ways that racial inequality is reproduced?

That is beginning to happen at one community school in a low-income urban area in northern California. Founded in 2015 by an acclaimed educator with more than 20 years of teaching and school leadership experience, the school aims to counter adverse community conditions and

meeting students' academic needs, the school seeks to ensure that they develop both deep knowledge of themselves and a strong sense of social responsibility to the wider community.

To make this vision a reality, teachers needed support to meet students' needs. The founder's deep knowledge of the community and compelling vision enabled him to attract teachers and school leaders of color, who also brought compassion, a deep understanding of the need for

caring relationships with students and strong partnerships with families, and a passion for social justice.

But many of them were novices who struggled to provide high-quality instruction — for example, to support literacy or intervene when students failed to comprehend the logic behind problem solving in math.

In addition, the faculty observed that some African-American students who had transferred to the school frequently experienced academic and behavioral difficulties, including exposure to trauma, that teachers were not equipped to address.

The school responded to these potential teaching and learning challenges by strengthening mutual accountability and capacity building. The school developed a system that used the knowledge and skill of two experienced lead teachers to support their less-experienced peers.

Teacher leaders offered instructional coaching to colleagues when requested or when site leadership determined it was needed. However, lead teachers were responsible for their own classrooms, and it soon became clear that the support they could provide their colleagues was insufficient.

The school then formed a partnership with a literacy curriculum provider that supplemented the coaching available to teachers. This capacity building started with an initial workshop to introduce a particular practice to groups of teachers from across the school, followed by targeted coaching in grade-level professional learning communities (PLCs) that sometimes included modeling from coaches on particular lessons.

By working together in learning teams and focusing on shared goals, teachers became accountable to each other, rather than simply to site leaders. They also gave input into the types of professional learning they needed



The school seeks to ensure that they develop both deep knowledge of themselves and a strong sense of social responsibility to the wider community.

and engaged in regular analysis of data obtained from formative assessments to monitor student progress.

Their collective focus on pursuing equity through mutual accountability fosters an atmosphere of openness where it is recognized that students' needs are treated as a reflection of individual teachers' needs.

The vision and mission of the school are visible in action: the dual immersion program, the infusion of ethnic studies and the arts in the curriculum, and the welcoming atmosphere evident throughout the school. The school has seen evidence of progress in student learning, including among its high-need students.

While students appear happy and engaged, significant challenges in teaching and learning remain. Close examination of student work reveals that many are struggling with basic skills, and many teachers continue to struggle in figuring out how to teach them. Using literacy coaches, a literacy-rich curriculum, and restorative discipline practices are all helping to create a positive learning environment at the classroom level, but change takes time.

Yet, as the school enters its fourth year, it is becoming clearer to leaders and staff what it will take to fulfill the

school's commitment to social justice and community transformation. School leaders understand that they must ensure that the pursuit of equity is based on an ongoing commitment to collective capacity building and a focus on academics for students. Without these components, the social and cultural supports the school provides will not be sufficient to guarantee equity in academic and social outcomes at the school.

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING: ELIMINATE BARRIERS TO EQUITY

In our work with schools and districts throughout the U.S., educators frequently ask us to cite examples of entire school districts realizing their equity goals. Abington Public Schools, outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is one of few U.S. districts making steady progress in reducing race and class disparities in academic outcomes for several years (Blankstein & Noguera, 2015).

The district has demonstrated that, by embracing its equity challenges and focusing on the ways in which race and class are implicated in achievement patterns, it can generate concrete evidence of improvements for all students.

Abington is a diverse community where race and class patterns overlap: 60% of students are white and middle class, but the other 40% are students of color from low-income families. Research has shown that school districts with similar demographics exhibit deep and persistent race and class disparities in academic performance, and progress is difficult to achieve even with an abundance of resources (Lewis & Diamond, 2017; Noguera & Wing, 2006). Abington defies those patterns.

Much of Abington's success can be attributed to the willingness of its leaders to take on equity issues

without fear, communicate their equity goals clearly to the community, and support students and teachers. When Superintendent Amy Sichel implemented a districtwide initiative in 2001, she presented data demonstrating the pervasive nature of race and class disparities throughout the district. She pledged that she and her staff could do a better job serving all students.

Despite the positive nature of her message, she encountered fears and protests from affluent white parents who believed their children would be shortchanged by the equity agenda. Sichel anticipated this response and responded to the school board and the community that the pursuit of equity was not about lowering standards and expectations.

Even as the district eliminated all forms of tracking and expanded access to honors and advanced placement courses, she pledged that the district would maintain quality and challenge all students.

The district pursued its ambitious goals by ensuring that whenever an equity barrier was eliminated (e.g., providing increased access to honors and advanced placement courses), teachers engaged in professional learning to make the change effective.

For example, in 2006, Abington placed all 8th-grade students in algebra. The move was based on research in the district and elsewhere that showed that, by expanding the number of students who enrolled in algebra by 8th grade, the district could significantly increase the number of students who graduated from high school college-ready (Noguera & Wing, 2006).

Though the evidence was clear, pursuit of the goal was fraught with difficulty. Not only was a student tracking system deeply entrenched in the district, but teachers were tracked, too. The most highly regarded teachers were typically assigned to teach the



Much of Abington's success can be attributed to the willingness of its leaders to take on equity issues without fear, communicate their equity goals clearly to the community, and support students and teachers.

highest-achieving students.

Math teachers complained that the students who had previously been kept out of algebra were unprepared. Similarly, affluent white parents complained that high achievers would be underserved if they were placed in classrooms with their less-capable peers.

To ensure that parents' and teachers' opposition would not thwart their plan, district leaders decided that students who earned less than a B in 7th-grade math would receive an additional period of math enrichment before beginning algebra.

Recognizing the likelihood that the enrichment class would be composed primarily of students of color, they arranged for the classes to be taught by some of the most highly regarded teachers so that white parents would be more likely to request that their children be placed there. This avoided a common tendency for schools to stigmatize the students of color they are attempting to help.

But for this plan to work, teachers who might struggle teaching heterogeneous groups of students would need support because they were used

to teaching only high-ability students. Eighth-grade algebra teachers were provided a common preparation period so that they could help each other build capacity for designing lessons and developing classroom strategies to address student needs.

The superintendent played an essential role in leading Abington's equity work, but she did not do it alone. The effort relied on a culture of continuous improvement through mutual accountability. Before being appointed superintendent, Sichel had worked as a guidance counselor in the district. Her training had led her to believe that the best way to support her staff in the new equity agenda would be to:

- Solicit their input when implementing new plans;
- Engage in collaborative problem solving as challenges emerged;
- Provide coaching and support to staff when they took on new roles; and
- Appeal to their core values and the belief that educators should be committed to making a difference for all students, even when some didn't actually share this belief.

These principles helped strengthen educators' sense of ownership and mutual accountability, ultimately leading to more equitable outcomes for their students.

The changes in Abington have been slow but steady. The district's success in advancing equity is yet another reminder that this work takes time, courage, and vision.

A COMMITMENT TO GROWTH

Inequity in education is not only perpetuated by a lack of access to educational opportunity. It is also furthered by classroom and school practices that prevent children from

Continued on p. 52



CURRICULUM CAMP

OREGON WRITING PROJECT'S SUMMER INSTITUTE ADDRESSES SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES

BY BILL BIGELOW AND LINDA CHRISTENSEN

It's another summer day at an Oregon Writing Project Curriculum Camp. Three teachers spread photos and historical documents across tables as they organize their curriculum guide, *Queer Portland: Unerasing History & Reclaiming Space*, which offers lessons on hidden stories of queer activism, history, and social justice.

Across the hall, science, social studies, language arts, and art teachers from different high schools work

together on a curriculum about who gets access to health care in our country — and why. Down the hall, several middle school teachers piece together a curriculum on Black Lives Matter, and a group of chemistry teachers works on activities leading up to a schoolwide climate justice fair.

Other teams collaborate on the impact of U.S. imperialism on Pacific Islands and the literary and political history of Luis Valdez's 1979 play, *Zoot Suit*, the first Chicano play on

Broadway.

The Oregon Writing Project Curriculum Camp provides spaces where teachers can work together as intellectuals to grow their own curriculum about issues that matter to their communities, from gentrification to high school student activism to Mexican immigration.

The Curriculum Camp supports teachers to become activists who develop lessons that help their students gain critical social insights while at the



Too often, civic engagement translates to electoral politics, with an implicit message to students: When you're older, you can vote and make a difference. We wanted to seed curriculum that would offer young people a more expansive version of political activism.

same time building their capacities to read and write.

Teachers' projects fill gaps in existing curricula by focusing on social justice and nurturing students' activist sensibilities — to question inequality and injustice and know that, individually and collectively, they have the capacity to make a difference in the world.

As educators with more than 60 years of classroom teaching experience, we have engaged in lots of professional learning, both as learners and as leaders in our roles as department chairs, *Rethinking Schools* editors, director of

the Oregon Writing Project, and Zinn Education Project co-director. With the benefit of these perspectives and experiences, we believe education is something that should be done with students, not to them, whether those students are children or adults.

To that end, we believe the professional learning we lead should embody and model the kind of classrooms, schools, and society that we seek to create — both through the content we present and the way we engage participants. We seek to nurture a more democratic and social justice-oriented vision of professional learning.

THE MIXER

In mixer role-plays, students assume the roles of different characters who meet one another and talk about their perspectives on significant issues in the world.

Mixers alert students to the complementary and contradictory ways that people experience the same events — how a Russian oil man and a Syrian farmer experience climate change as billionaire and refugee; how a California Miwok Indian and an enslaved African-American respond to the U.S.-Mexico War; how the suppression of indigenous languages affects people from Africa to New Mexico to Northern Ireland.

Students meet each other as they search out how they differ and how they connect. One of the fundamental truths of an unequal world is that people experience social reality in different ways depending on race, gender, social class, nationality, location, and linguistic heritage. The mixer brings this to life for students.

See sample mixers (registration required):

- Burned Out of Homes and History: Unearthing the silenced voices of the Tulsa Race Riot, www.zinnedproject.org/login/?redirect_to=/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/tulsa_race_riot.pdf.
- U.S.-Mexico War Tea Party: "We take nothing by conquest, thank God," www.zinnedproject.org/login/?redirect_to=/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/us_mexico_war-1.pdf.

In this vision, professional learning should:

- Be part of a broader effort to make the world more equal and just;
- Engage teachers as one would engage students to model the teaching strategies we value;
- Demonstrate exemplary curriculum for social justice and point out problematic aspects of other curriculum;
- Engage themes of injustice and planetary crisis in ways that are joyful, sometimes even playful, and not grim;
- Honor the lives of participants, drawing on their experiences and insights; and
- Treat people like professionals, with respect and trust.

CURRICULUM CAMP MODEL

The summer institute glimpsed above, known as Curriculum Camp, is one model that demonstrates our approach to professional learning. For almost two decades, we have put the principles of teaching both social justice and literacy skills into weeklong Curriculum Camps for multiple districts in the Portland, Oregon, area.

The Curriculum Camp was birthed in 1999, when Linda Christensen worked as a language arts teacher on special assignment after co-teaching a literature and history class with Bill Bigelow at Portland's Jefferson High School for many years.

Christensen collaborated with a group of language arts teachers representing each of Portland's district high schools in designing a curriculum writing camp designed to give teachers time to rethink the traditional canon, bringing a more diverse, multicultural, contemporary reading list into high school language arts classrooms. Since the early years, Curriculum Camps have expanded to include other

disciplines and grade levels, but four key components remain.

1. Commit resources.

Instead of just buying books for teachers to use, Christensen and fellow language arts teachers secured a grant to pay teachers their hourly wage to come together and write curriculum guides to teach literature.

It would have been cheaper and faster to buy packaged curricula, but the district's high school department chairs wanted to hone teachers' capacities to create curriculum from the ground up, so they chose to spend the time and money sharing and building teacher knowledge.

Because the books — such as *Donald Duk, Kindred, The Color Purple, Thousand Pieces of Gold, and Always Running* — include sensitive cultural, racial, and gender issues, as well as events that not all teachers were familiar with, teachers knew it was important to spend time educating themselves about the social and historical context of the literature as they talked about teaching strategies to bring these works to life in the classroom.

2. Experience and examine model lessons.

The first three of the camp's five days begin with morning workshops that frame our work pedagogically and politically. These foundational workshops engage teachers in the kind of learning experiences we want their students to experience. Our goal is for teachers to draw on strategies from the morning sessions as they construct their own curricula, so we pause to make explicit aspects of the activities they participate in.

The workshops offer interactive activities that enlist participants in rethinking a piece of history or culture that is normalized and taken for granted. One morning session

questioned the legitimacy of "standard English" by looking at the ways colonial countries oppressed home languages. Another explored the history of the border with Mexico through a roleplay activity on the 1846-48 U.S.-Mexico war, followed by a critique of a problematic textbook used in Portland schools that ignores the war's causes and fails to explore the war's social impact.

Teachers participate in these workshops first as students — engaging in mixer role plays (see box on p. 49), reading documents, and writing narratives, poetry, and essays — and then as teachers, reflecting on the content and the methodology of the lessons. We encourage them to ask questions and use critical reading strategies, such as analyzing curriculum materials for perspective and bias.

They then contribute to a "theme and evidence wall," a transparent, public display of ideas developed throughout the workshop that creates a collective curricular vocabulary and serves as a reference when they begin writing.

3. Collaborate in work groups.

Each afternoon, teachers gather in grade-level or content-area groups, often working with teachers from other buildings or districts, to build engaging curriculum about a social issue that they think will resonate with students.

After deciding on the unit of study, they share and read materials and map out a curricular route that includes "show, don't tell" activities, such as role-plays or simulations; personal narratives that ground the curriculum in students' lives; critical reading activities of historical, literary, or scientific documents; artistic expressions like poetry, interior monologues, or historical fiction; and a culminating project — for example, an essay, pamphlet, or podcast that allows students to demonstrate their grasp of complex issues.

During these work times, Oregon Writing Project coaches advise the groups — sometimes providing direction when a group gets stuck, bringing in additional materials, bringing the focus back to a social justice issue, helping generate ideas for student work, or writing a role for a mixer or directions for a reading strategy.

Of course, not everything produced in Curriculum Camp is new. Some of it draws on lessons teachers have already taught. Some of it incorporates or repurposes aspects of the existing curriculum. And some of it draws on this established curriculum but invites students to ask about its silences or biases — whose voices are missing, whose stories pushed to the side?

4. Reflect, extend, and share.

Curriculum Camps do not end in the summer. Teachers come together four times during the school year to share their curriculum guides, examine student work inspired by the units, and build upcoming lessons with colleagues across the district.

We ask one or two groups from the summer to present a lesson from their unit as morning workshops. During these curricular rehearsals, participants praise what went well, but also point out pieces that need revision, such as confusing role-play roles, articles that don't quite match the intent of the lesson, or unclear instructions, and contribute ways to extend them.

We encourage teachers to share their work with colleagues, so that even individuals who were unable to participate in Curriculum Camp become its beneficiaries. Curriculum Camp participants have presented pieces from their units in department and faculty meetings, at local and national conferences, and in professional journals.

Social justice professional learning imparts new strategies and content,

but also creates forums for teachers to develop and enact curriculum that rises up from the classroom and reflects students' needs, interests, and contexts.

CURRICULUM CAMP IN ACTION

The Portland Public Schools' curriculum office, under the leadership of Van Truong, supported the Oregon Writing Project to hold a Curriculum Camp in 2015 with a focus on civic engagement. Too often, civic engagement translates to electoral politics, with an implicit message to students: When you're older, you can vote and make a difference. We wanted to seed curriculum that would offer young people a more expansive version of political activism.

We focused our morning curriculum modeling on environmental justice. Rethinking Schools had just published *A People's Curriculum for the Earth: Teaching Climate Change and the Environmental Crisis*, edited by Bill Bigelow and Portland high school teacher Tim Swinehart. A grant from the Lannan Foundation enabled us to provide copies of the book to educators who participated in workshops on teaching environmental justice themes. In addition, the school district's curriculum on climate change was inadequate, and the two of us wanted to begin to address this.

Bigelow began the week by leading a role-play on La Vía Campesina, the global collection of what it calls peasant "food sovereignty" organizations — considered by many to be the world's largest social movement. This first activity asked participants to imagine themselves as members of La Vía Campesina organizations in Haiti, Brazil, Mozambique, the Basque Country, India, and South Korea.

The G7, the organization of the world's richest economies, was meeting in The Hague to address the question: "How will we feed the

world?" La Vía Campesina was not invited, but members planned to show up to articulate a grassroots response. After distributing role sheets, we asked participants to write interior monologues to deepen their empathy with members of the organizations they were to represent.

Next, they met one another through a mixer activity that helped them think through the common problems they confronted and look for what unites these far-flung organizations as members of La Vía Campesina. Each group read and analyzed a G7 proposal — which features corporate-driven, export-heavy agriculture, patent protection for genetically modified crops, and other laissez-faire policies — then expressed their critique and offered alternatives through placards they designed.

In a subsequent morning session, Tim Swinehart shared a strategy for writing personal narratives on the joys and loss of special places, and then showed how he puts it into action by weaving students' own lives with accounts of the fossil fuel "sacrifice zones" described in the film *This Changes Everything*.

On another morning, Christensen led a series of critical reading and essay-writing lessons about the impact of toxic waste in a Tijuana barrio and the inspirational work of environmental justice *promotoras* (women community organizers) to force the U.S. and Mexican governments to clean up the pollution.

Each afternoon, participants worked in groups to identify the problems they sought to address. They brainstormed, and many groups used strategies from the model lessons as prompts for their own curricular expression. But the curricula generated were by no means copycats.

In this civic engagement Curriculum Camp, Amy Lindahl and

Amy Polzin wrote *Sugar Subterfuge*, blending the social justice question, “Who is responsible for the rise of childhood Type II diabetes?” with the science question “What are the four macromolecules essential to cell structure and function?”

Anabel Muñana and Donald Rose developed curriculum on Matt de la Peña’s *Mexican WhiteBoy* — “a unit examining definitions of identity, how they are constructed, and how persons may struggle with determining or expressing theirs.”

Hyung Nam, Julie O’Neill, Chris Buehler, and Sylvia McGauley wrote *Civics, Social Justice, and Nonviolent Direct Action: Rebels with Causes*, explaining in their introduction that their lessons make up “a different kind of civics,” one “that is more radical, in that it addresses issues at their deep roots and

Equity through mutual accountability

Continued from p. 47
acquiring the academic skills and knowledge needed to be successful in college, careers, and life.

If educators are to counter the forces that generate inequity in society, they need intentional professional learning that builds their knowledge and capacity to break down barriers and ensure that all children get what they need to thrive. With that knowledge and capacity, they become equipped to hold each other accountable for promoting equity.

Without it, solutions like culturally responsive education or engaging teachers in bias training are unlikely to produce greater equity. A commitment to equity in education is a commitment to personal and collective growth.

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may even include civil disobedience.”

These were first drafts, not yet tested in actual classrooms. But the week was a festival of imagination and social justice engagement. And teachers would come back together throughout the following year to reflect, extend, and share the results of their experiments, bringing a commitment to learning and growing this work together.

CURRICULUM FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

The aim of Curriculum Camps, of course, is not just the production of lively and relevant teaching guides that can be shared throughout the school district, although that’s important. The broader objective is twofold: to expand people’s vision of what curriculum is and where it comes from, and for teachers to see themselves —

individually and collectively — as leaders of a movement to infuse social justice into curriculum. Curriculum Camp teachers are activists.

At this moment of increasing xenophobia, racism, and inequality, we need sites of professional learning that help educators teach for a better world. We owe it to our students. We owe it to everyone.

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Reach. Investigate. Discover.

IDEAS

'I AM A MATH PERSON AND SO ARE YOU'

Think about a teacher you know who lacks confidence teaching mathematics. Now picture this teacher passionately engaged in making sure her students not only understand mathematics but also experience the joy of working on really hard problems.

Visualize this teacher enthusiastically talking with colleagues about her students' mathematical thinking and collaborating in designing rich learning tasks. Imagine her telling students, "I am a math person and so are you."

"Mindset for math:

Coaching cycle empowers students and teachers" p. **60**

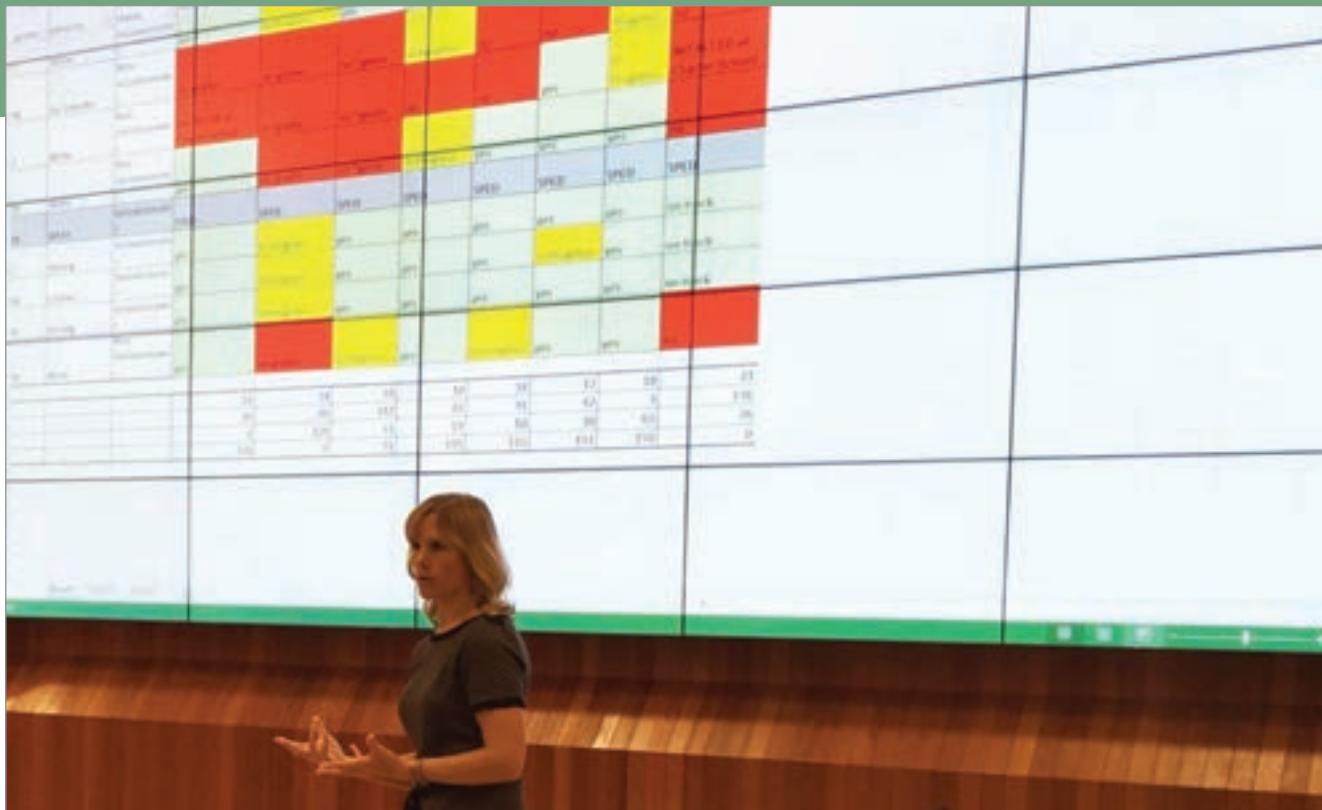


Photo by ELIZABETH NEWMAN

Jennifer Johnson, principal of Eureka High School in Humboldt County, California, illustrates the inquiry process her school's team used to understand obstacles to student completion of a college prep course portfolio. The process helped the team translate its learning to decisions and actions.

WHERE DATA LEAD, SUCCESS FOLLOWS

RURAL CALIFORNIA DISTRICTS BAND TOGETHER TO FOCUS ON COLLEGE READINESS

BY ELIZABETH NEWMAN AND HADAR BAHARAV

Located along 100 miles of California's North Coast, Humboldt is a large, rural county, best known for its redwood forests and agriculture. The county is home to 136,000 residents and 31 school

districts, some so small that they serve fewer than 10 students.

Humboldt County's postsecondary options include a two-year college and a four-year university, both part of the state system. But in 2016, just 32% of high school graduates met requirements

for entrance to California's four-year college system, compared with 45% statewide. The Post-Secondary Strengthening Collaborative is trying to change that.

In 2014, the close-knit education community in Humboldt came

At the heart of that work was an effort to help the partners use cycles of inquiry to analyze, study, and act on data.

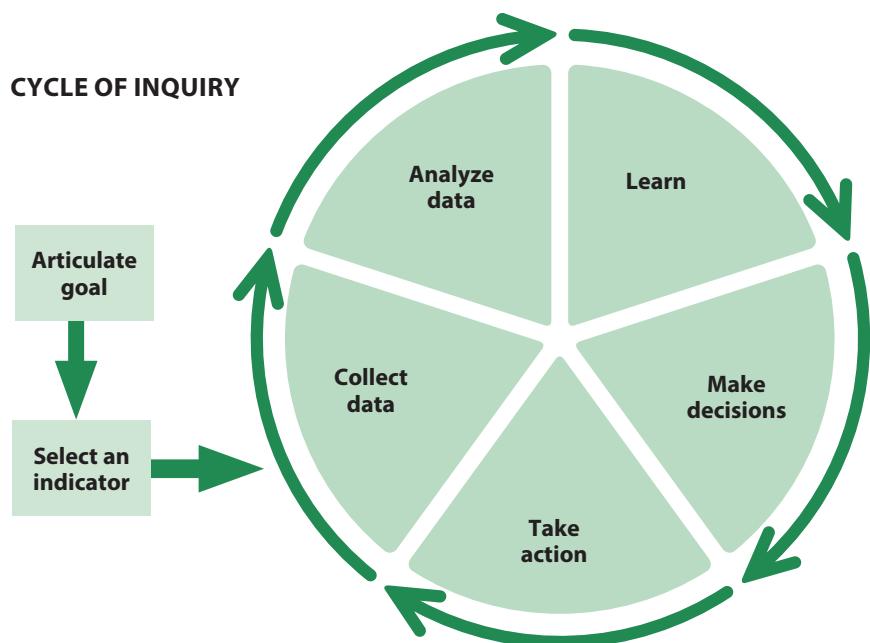
together to address the potential to improve college readiness and completion among the county's students. A diverse group of education leaders spanning K-12 through college formed the collaborative, with leadership from the Humboldt County Office of Education, a regional entity that supports local districts, offers countywide services, and maintains connections with local higher education institutions.

Enter the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at the Stanford Graduate School of Education. The Gardner Center partners with communities, researchers, and practitioners to produce evidence-based research to improve and strengthen the well-being of youth, inform policy and practice in the fields of education and youth development, and emphasize the importance of equity and capacity-building in youth-serving organizations.

The Gardner Center partnered with the county office to build the collaborative's capacity, including designing and leading a professional learning process for educators from participating schools and institutions. At the heart of that work was an effort to help the partners use cycles of inquiry to analyze, study, and act on data.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING GOALS AND STRUCTURE

Recognizing the need for a data-driven approach, the collaborative set



two main professional learning goals for its participants:

- To become familiar with college readiness and completion indicators at three interrelated levels: individual, setting, and system; and
- To strengthen education leaders' capacity to conduct cycles of inquiry framed by the indicators.

Cycles of inquiry link actionable indicators of student success to supports for students. Further, they help illuminate the issues and conditions for improvements. By embracing and centering the cycle of inquiry approach, participants engaged in comprehensive and deep learning about the problem

and its sources, identification and definition of goals and attainable objectives, informed decision making and strategy formation, progress monitoring and continuous improvements based on targets and measures. See figure above.

During the first two years, teams from a small, core group of institutions (districts and colleges) engaged in professional learning and opportunities to practice cycles of inquiry. Early in the process, the Gardner Center provided presentations and facilitated discussions that built from the College Readiness Indicator Systems resource suite, which provides tools to support the data to action approach in schools and districts. (For more information,

IDEAS

visit <https://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/publications/college-readiness-indicator-system-cris-resource-series>.)

Rooted in the College Readiness Indicator Systems principles, we shared a systematic approach to college readiness and completion that combines the following elements encompassed within the cycle of inquiry:

- A trilevel lens, recognizing the setting (school) and system (district) contexts for youth development;
- Domains of learning, reflecting the concept that college readiness and completion require academic preparedness, academic tenacity, and college knowledge;
- Indicators of college readiness and college completion, driven by the understanding that indicators should be research-informed, measurable, meaningful, malleable, and impactful; and
- Supports, emphasizing that while indicators are applicable for all students, supports are tailored interventions.

Sessions in the first two years empowered partners with the necessary tools and supports to advance cycles of inquiry aimed at increasing students' readiness for, and completion of, college. We planned discussions and exercises that focused on indicators relevant to the region, such as student participation in college prep curriculum, access and uptake of student supports, and completion of financial aid applications.

Participating districts and institutions of higher education selected one or more of these indicators on which to focus their own data-to-action efforts. Partners carried out this work at their sites between convenings and shared their progress and challenges with one another at subsequent sessions.

LEARNING AMONG PARTNERS

In the early phase, building trust among partners was essential. We placed a high value on learning and improvement supported by inquiry, rather than placing blame or declaring success.

With this foundation of trust, an important part of the sessions was partners' presentations of their progress on their cycles of inquiry. We helped partners use a protocol for sharing that included structured opportunities to present aspects of a team's inquiry to other teams and for other teams to ask questions and provide feedback.

Partners shared information about their inquiry process, data analyses, changes to policy and practice, and implementation of supports. A critical aspect of these presentations and discussions was sharing challenges faced and lessons learned. Sometimes this meant that institutional teams shared what they saw as their own shortcomings. This was valuable both to the content of the learning and the ongoing trust building that underlies all the work.

For example, one district developed spreadsheets that visually represented their analysis of college track course completion. The analysis contained some surprises — including some that disappointed the district. The district shared its analysis and tools at a convening.

The district also shared some of the actions it took based on the data analysis, such as policy changes. Subsequently, some partners adapted the tools to suit their institutions' needs and analyzed their data with the benefit of insights shared by other partners.

This group sharing process enhanced knowledge for everyone and also provided growth opportunities. After two years, the original group of core partners grew to include eight local districts in addition to a second team

from the county office, and those who had been part of the core group were able to take on leadership roles.

As new members learned basic concepts, existing members presented their own work and received targeted feedback to support their ongoing inquiry. This built a sense of regional efficacy and provided new districts with a better understanding of inquiry's potential. It laid the groundwork for sustaining the work into the future by strengthening regional capacity.

By developing leadership among members and embedding and institutionalizing attitudes and practices of inquiry, we expect that the individual and collective culture of inquiry will continue into the future.

IMPACT ON PARTNERS AND STUDENTS

We already see evidence of the collaborative's impacts on Humboldt County's students and educational institutions. Members took unique approaches to inquiry, based on available data, staff capacity, goals and strategies, or other local factors.

For example, one high school redesigned credit recovery opportunities to support students to meet college eligibility requirements. This was a result of the team's inquiry into student participation in college prep curriculum (an individual level indicator of college readiness), illuminating that retake options for some core classes did not meet college eligibility requirements.

As another example, through a cycle of inquiry focused on helping more high school students complete college-track courses, members from one high school district identified that many freshmen from rural communities were failing courses required for continuation in the college prep sequence.

The district's collaborative team hypothesized that it is difficult for some students to transition from

LISTENING TO MEMBERS	
To gain insights into members' experience of the collaborative and inform the development of its next iteration, we conducted an anonymous survey of participants. Twenty-seven participants responded, shedding light on the value of the professional learning related to the use of inquiry to inform strategy and action; capacity and norms of continuous learning and improvement; and the benefits of cross-system, regional collaboration.	
Select survey items	% agree or strongly agree
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	
Participation in the collaborative has influenced my mindset/attitude toward data and/or data-informed decision-making.	96
CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT	
My institution has built its capacity for continuous learning and improvement.	88
Informed by our work related to the collaborative, my district/institution has taken steps (or will probably take steps in the near future) that will likely result in more students being ready for college / completing college.	85
As a result of our participation in the collaborative, my district/institution has created new norms around the use of data and inquiry in decision-making and/or strategy formation and execution.	65
My district/institution has increased (or has the potential to increase) stakeholders' buy-in for data use, inquiry, and strategy development.	92
THE VALUE OF COLLABORATION	
Bringing together local partners with different levels of experience in data and inquiry outweighed the associated challenges.	100
The Post-Secondary Strengthening Collaborative serves a valuable cause by promoting cross dialogue between districts and higher education institutions.	100

small, rural middle schools into the district's comprehensive high school, often a long bus ride away. The team considered creative ways to address this issue, including establishing a Freshman Academy for students identified as those who would benefit from a focused transition program.

Moving forward, the district will analyze the results of its academy pilot through a new cycle of inquiry. This will inform the student selection criteria and shed light on the need for program modifications. It will also help gain the school board's support for expansion if it finds the program is effective.

FEEDBACK FROM PARTNERS

In a survey of collaborative partners, after most members had been

participating for one or two years, 88% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that, through the adoption of the cycle of inquiry approach, their district or institution had broadly built its capacity for continuous learning and improvement. And 100% agreed or strongly agreed that, as individuals, they will likely take what they have learned through participation in the collaborative to their future positions. (See table above.)

Collaborative members said they appreciated the process and the opportunities that the structure provided, as illustrated in survey responses like these:

- “I'd like to continue learning ways to engage staff, analyze data, and support each other.

I've gotten so many good ideas and such good feedback throughout the process.”

- “We need to continue this collaborative opportunity, as rich and deep discussions occur that lead to systemic change.”
- “This is one of the most valuable educational endeavors I have been part of.”

LOOKING AHEAD

The collaborative has accomplished a lot, but much is still left to do. The Humboldt County Office of Education, the collaborative's main convener, hopes to harness the energy and power of its successes to date to design the collaborative's next phase, which may include:

- Ways to better engage small districts, perhaps creating a cohort that works on a joint cycle of inquiry;
- Hiring personnel to support those districts that do not have an in-house capacity to analyze data; and
- Opportunities to expand inquiry to areas that involve both K-12 and postsecondary members, including outreach and enrollment designed to engage students.

LEARNING FROM CHALLENGES

Like our partners in the collaborative, we are committed to sharing challenges, learning from them, and finding strategies to address them. Among the challenges:

Seed funding ended: The county office of education launched the

collaborative with support from College Futures Foundation. When that funding ended, the county office of education found new resources and called on existing and new members to contribute funds.

Paying to take part in the collaborative increased members' commitment and ownership. In this way, the end of funding did not cause the collaborative to contract. Instead, the collaborative expanded its ranks. This broadened the range of perspectives and the reach of the professional learning. As such, the collaborative reached more educators and students.

Disconnections between existing and new members: Building trust among new and existing members presented a challenge. To address this, we encouraged veteran members to share not only their successes but also their

struggles and disproven hypotheses. This allowed all members to engage in dialogue and collective work that was inclusive, supportive, and inspiring.

As articulated by one local leader, collaborative members moved away from an "us-versus-them" paradigm. Using data in a collaborative, intentional, and mutually supportive environment helped strengthen a regional approach to addressing the needs of all students.

Limited capacity threatened engagement: Many of the members came from small teams, so prioritizing limited resources and staff time was often difficult. To ensure that members remained engaged, the county office of education reinforced that the collaborative's work aligned with other accountability requirements, local commitments, and districts' interests. Also, by emphasizing local context,

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we addressed members' unique needs. Members saw benefits in the collective work and dialogue that took place at each meeting.

Finally, members understood the long-term value in learning to embed inquiry into their institutions. They realized that, by making their work more efficient and targeted, they would better their chances to direct scarce resources wisely. Keeping focused on creating value for all participants resulted in strong participation, even when resources were tight.

TAKE-AWAYS

Professional learning in a collaborative environment, focused on building a sustainable culture of inquiry and improvement, holds powerful potential. Through the work in Humboldt County, we offer the following three lessons, which are particularly applicable to rural communities:

A culture of inquiry and data-informed decision-making is an important asset.

Armed with competencies that support processes of inquiry, educators are better equipped to ensure that local programs and policies are effectively meeting the needs of their students.

Starting with training, tools, and the opportunity to focus on partners' specific areas of concern, collaborative participants could build their own competencies while simultaneously impacting their institutions.

Rural communities face unique challenges to collaborative learning because of their geographic isolation, so coming together was central to achieving the collaborative's professional learning goals.

At convenings, members from diverse organizations could engage and learn across geographical and institutional boundaries. Coming together also strengthened informal

professional relationships and helped participants expand their professional network.

Building community-based knowledge and embedding data-informed processes into local institutions can be a powerful tool for collectively supporting a community or region.

By designing learning in ways that lead to institutionalization of such processes, we can help extend the impacts beyond the tenure of individual participants and build sustainability so the work can continue without external trainers.

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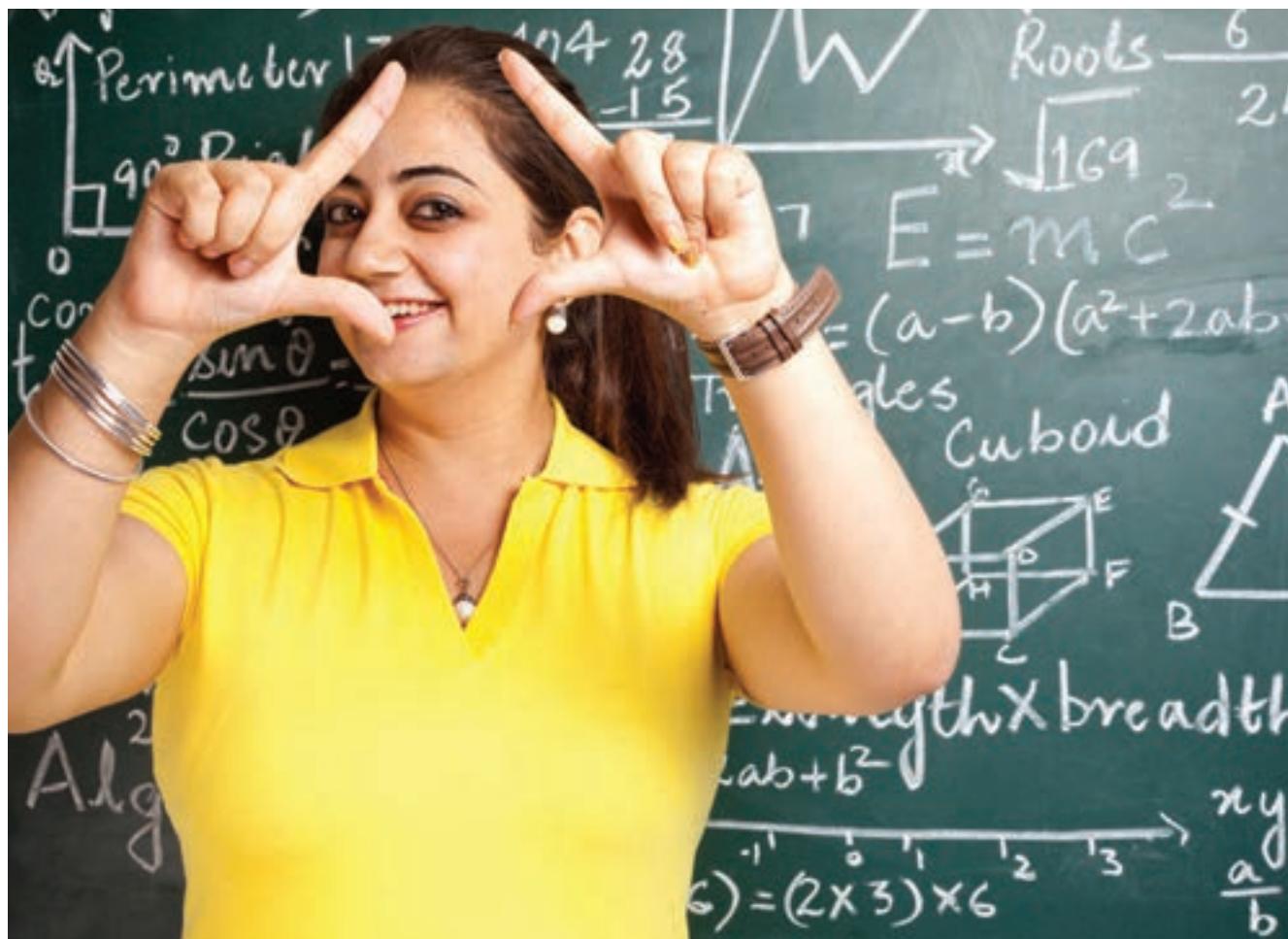
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MINDSET FOR MATH

COACHING CYCLE EMPOWERS STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

BY SUE CHAPMAN AND MARY MITCHELL

If we want students to see themselves as capable of learning and doing mathematics, then teachers must possess confidence in their own abilities to understand and use mathematics.

If we want students to see

mathematics as relevant to their lives, as worthy of their time and interest, then teachers must proclaim the importance of mathematics in their own lives and have a passion for empowering students with mathematical tools and ways of thinking.

If we want students to recognize the satisfaction that comes from tackling and persevering through challenging mathematics problems, then teachers must also see themselves as mathematics learners.

But what if teachers don't see

EXAMPLES OF PRODUCTIVE BELIEFS FROM PRINCIPLES TO ACTIONS	
Guiding principle for school mathematics	Productive beliefs
TEACHING AND LEARNING	Mathematics learning should focus on developing understanding of concepts and procedures through problem solving, reasoning, and discourse.
ACCESS AND EQUITY	Mathematical ability is a function of opportunity, experience, and effort — not of innate intelligence. All students are capable of participating and achieving in mathematics, and all deserve support to achieve at the highest levels.
CURRICULUM	Mathematics is a dynamic field that is ever-changing. Emphases in the curriculum are evolving, and it is important to embrace and adapt to appropriate changes.
TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGY	Finding answers to a mathematical computation is not sufficient. Students need to understand whether an answer is reasonable and how the results apply to a given context.
ASSESSMENT	Assessment is a process that should help students become better judges of their own work, assist them in recognizing high-quality work when they produce it, and support them in using evidence to advance their own learning.
PROFESSIONALISM	Teachers of mathematics continue to learn throughout their careers.

Source: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2014.

mathematics as comprehensible, purposeful, and fun? Unfortunately, this is the case for many teachers, including elementary teachers who are charged with mentoring the next generation into a lifelong relationship with mathematics.

As mathematics education leader and researcher Jo Boaler describes it, these teachers do not hold a mathematical mindset. That mindset involves “knowing that math is a subject of growth and [the math user’s] role is to learn and think about new ideas.” This is due in large part to teachers’ own experiences as math learners in school. Boaler asserts that many elementary teachers “have, at some point in their own learning, been told they cannot do mathematics, or that mathematics is not for them. Many teach mathematics with their own fear of the subject” (Boaler, 2016, p. 8). For example, in a

mathematics methods course one of us teaches for preservice teacher candidates, students often describe the subject as confusing, stressful, difficult, and “a necessary evil.”

A teacher’s mindset influences many aspects of her teaching and her students’ learning, including the learning tasks she offers, the ways in which she orchestrates classroom discourse, her response to mistakes, and the assessment practices she employs.

When teachers learn about the research behind mathematical mindsets (Boaler, 2016; Dweck, 2008; Saphier, 2017) and when they examine their own current mindsets, they can begin to reset their approach to learning and teaching math.

They can choose to believe that all students are capable of understanding and enjoying it, and to set them all up for success.

DEVELOPING A POSITIVE MATHEMATICAL MINDSET

The landmark National Council of Teachers of Mathematics publication *Principles to Actions: Ensuring Mathematical Success for All* (2014) acknowledges the prevalence of negative beliefs about math and counters them by describing productive beliefs that constitute a mathematical mindset. The beliefs or principles are informed by research and can accelerate efforts to ensure success in mathematics for all students. (See table above.)

A COACHING CYCLE TO EXPLORE MATHEMATICAL MINDSET

Coaching is a method suited to supporting teachers as they learn to recognize and navigate their internal mindsets because mindset awareness and choice are metacognitive processes that can be learned and strengthened

PLAN THE COACHING PARTNERSHIP	
Steps	Possible questions
CLARIFY GOALS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you hoping to accomplish for your students as a result of our exploration of mindsets in your classroom? • Why are these goals important to you?
ESTABLISH CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you know if you have achieved these goals? • What evidence might you look for?
DECIDE ON FOCUS QUESTION.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What questions do you have related to mindset? • What specific question are you interested in studying now?
IDENTIFY STRATEGIES.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What strategies might you try to promote growth mindsets? • What might you see or hear during this lesson that would provide insight into your students' mindsets?
DETERMINE DATA SOURCES AND DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOLS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kinds of information might help you to answer your research question? • What are some ways we might collect this data?
SPECIFY TIMELINE.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your timeline for trying out the strategies you've identified? • When will we collect the data? • When will we meet to review and analyze the data?

through practice.

The following steps can help coaches and the school leaders who oversee and support them facilitate a cycle of inquiry to transform teachers' mindsets and students' learning. This plan can and should be adapted for specific contexts.

1. Invite thinking about mathematical mindset.

A coach can lay the groundwork for professional learning about mindset by offering experiences that provoke thought and conversation on this topic. What do your teachers know about mindset? Have they considered how their mathematical mindsets influence their effectiveness as teachers? What experiences might you provide to help teachers examine the interplay of mindsets within their own classrooms?

Here are some options for engaging teachers in this first step:

- **Pose this question: How is mindset impacting our students' mathematics**

achievement? You can introduce the topic with something like this: "I've been hearing about the latest brain research and its implications for learning, including the fact that students' mathematical mindsets are as important as overall growth mindset. I'd like to hear your thoughts about how we might apply these findings in our school. We're having a brief discussion about mathematical mindsets after school today. I hope you can join us."

- **Offer a miniworkshop.** See the sample outline on p. 63.
- **Facilitate an article study.** See p. 64 for a list of suggested articles.
- **Survey teachers and/or students about their attitudes towards mathematics.** Share and discuss the results. See a list of questions in this Google doc: <http://bit.ly/2PIVYeB>.

2. Plan the learning partnership.

The purpose of this step in the coaching cycle is to plan an informal action research study to learn more about mathematical mindsets. Action research is the process of trying out new instructional practices and collecting data about the impact of these practices with the goal of improving student learning (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008).

The steps and coaching questions above suggest a possible map for this planning conversation. Coaches may move through the steps in any order and may revisit steps in whatever ways best support the teacher's thinking and planning.

Start by engaging teachers' curiosity. Ask teachers what they are wondering about, what they hope to learn, and what they want to accomplish for students. Here are some example wonderings to get them going:

- How can I tell if my students are experiencing the right level of cognitive struggle?

REFLECT ON THE DATA	
Steps	Possible questions
DESCRIPTION	At first glance, what are you noticing in the data?
SENSE-MAKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some ways you might organize the data? • What patterns may be emerging? • Are there any data that stand out? • What surprises you?
INTERPRETATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What might these patterns mean? • How do the patterns relate to the questions you have posed?
IMPLICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you learning about your students? • What might be some implications for your teaching? • What are you learning about yourself as a teacher? • How might you act on your new understandings? • What next steps might you take? • What support might you need? • What new questions do you have?

- How can I encourage a sense of joy and wonder in my math class?
- How can I celebrate mistakes as opportunities for learning?

Use the steps that follow to work with teachers to plan the action research.

3. Gather data.

Because the teacher must construct the meaning of the data, it is critical that she own decisions about the data to be collected and the processes for gathering this data. According to Costa and Garmston (2002, p. 48), “The intent is to cast the colleague in the role of experimenter and researcher, and the coach in the role of data collector.”

You and your teachers may opt to collect data from classroom observations — for example, the number of students who volunteer to answer questions, who explain their thinking, or who respond to peers’ thinking and ideas. Instead or in addition, you may look at student work to examine evidence of students engaging in a rigorous task when given choices or students reflecting on the

A MINIWORKSHOP ON MATHEMATICAL MINDSETS

1. Ask teachers to create mind maps representing how they think and feel about the subject of mathematics. Share and discuss the results.
2. Review the *Standards for Mathematical Practice* (NGO Center & CCSSO, 2010, pp. 6–8) or your state’s standards for mathematical practices. Invite teachers to share their personal mathematics learning stories as they reflect on these standards.
3. Share a productive belief and a parallel unproductive belief from *Principles to Actions: Ensuring Mathematical Success for All* (NCTM, 2014). Have teachers identify the underlying assumptions and consequences of each belief.
4. Invite teachers to create “I wonder” statements related to mindset that could be investigated using an action research process.

influence of mistakes on their learning.

To obtain this data, you might work together to design a student survey or an observational recording form for noting when students participate in a discussion. You might ask students to complete a journaling prompt with questions related to mindset such as “What advice might you give another student who is having trouble with math?” You also might make a video or audio recording of the lesson so teachers can later review and analyze it.

4. Reflect on the experience.

As the teacher and coach review and analyze the data together, they find answers to the action research question posed.

They also co-construct a deeper understanding of the dynamics of mindset in the classroom. The questions in the table at top can serve as tools to support teachers in making sense of the data collected and in thinking about causal relationships that may be suggested by the data.

IDEAS

NEXT STEPS

Having completed a coaching cycle focused on mathematical mindsets, the teacher and coach can decide together what their next steps might be. Options include launching another coaching cycle based on questions that came from the reflective conversation; sharing the results with others to generate new ideas and questions; broadening the scope of the action research (for example, to a whole department or school); or working with a team to write a schoolwide belief statement about mathematics.

These projects can change minds to ultimately change teaching and learning. Think about a teacher you know who lacks confidence teaching mathematics. Now picture this teacher passionately engaged in making sure her students not only understand mathematics but also experience the joy of working on really hard problems.

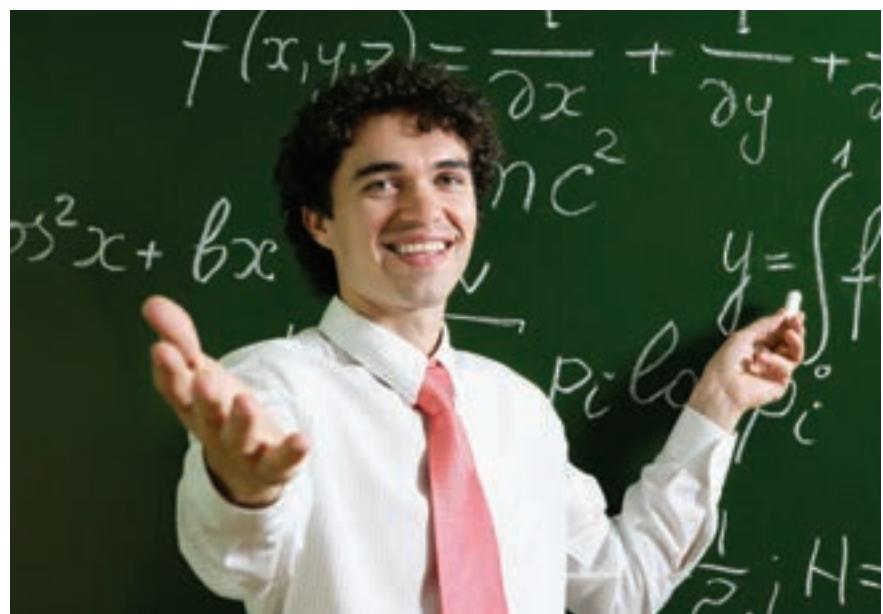
Visualize this teacher enthusiastically talking with colleagues about her students' mathematical thinking and collaborating in designing rich learning tasks. Imagine her telling students, "I am a math person and so are you."

The end goal in cultivating a mathematical mindset is to empower students to be self-directed in their math learning, a critical skill for their futures. Teachers must hold themselves accountable for nurturing students' mathematical mindsets as well as understanding concepts and honing skills. This is the key to providing all students in all classes in all schools with opportunities to learn and succeed in mathematics.

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ARTICLE STUDY SUGGESTIONS

- "Teacher mindsets and student learning": <https://mathsolutions.com/uncategorized/teacher-mindsets-and-student-learning/>
- "Actionable feedback as a means of promoting a growth mindset": <https://mathsolutions.com/uncategorized/actionable-feedback-as-a-means-of-promoting-a-growth-mindset/>
- "Helping struggling students build a mathematical mindset": <https://mathsolutions.com/uncategorized/helping-struggling-students-build-mathematical-mindset/>
- Blog posts from Jo Boaler's website: youcubed.org

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Discuss. Collaborate. Facilitate.

TOOLS

BELIEFS

ACTIONS

SYSTEMS

**Advancing equity:
A professional learning
planning tool**

p. **66**



A 3-PRONGED APPROACH TO ADVANCING EQUITY

Advancing equity requires ongoing inquiry into personal beliefs, a commitment to expanding one's repertoire of professional practices, and constant collaboration to develop student-centered systems. Achieving that balance requires a strategic approach to professional learning.

ADVANCING EQUITY: A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLANNING TOOL

BY JILL HARRISON BERG AND SONIA CAUS GLEASON

The article "Come together for equity" on pp. 24-27 highlights the importance of engaging educators in examining beliefs, practices, and systems that support or hinder all students' opportunities to learn. In the pages that follow, we present a tool that can help education leaders and professional learning specialists assess whether and how they are creating space for this work and brainstorm additional ways to prioritize it.

This tool is designed to help you think about both the content of professional learning (whether and how it addresses beliefs, practices, and systems) and the contexts (individual, team, or whole-school professional learning). Schools are often challenged to balance many contexts and needs for professional learning, and the challenge is especially acute when it comes to advancing equity because the process

requires ongoing inquiry into personal beliefs, a commitment to expanding one's repertoire of professional practices, and constant collaboration to develop student-centered systems. It requires a strategic approach to professional learning.

To create and implement such an approach, we encourage you to consider each professional learning context and content area in turn. This tool has three separate sections focused on individual learning, team learning, and whole-school learning. Each provides space for considering beliefs, practices, and systems, including where your school's opportunities stand now and how they can be improved moving forward.

After you complete the three sections, we encourage you to consider the reflection questions in Part 2 in order to compare across the three contexts and consider all of your efforts as a whole.

PART 1: EXAMINING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CONTEXTS

INDEPENDENT LEARNING CONTEXTS

Begin by considering professional learning opportunities that support educators' independent learning in your school. These might include goal-setting processes, coaching and modeling, peer observation, and many other strategies.

	Equity extensions What existing practices can you adjust to create more opportunities for individual educators to examine beliefs, actions, and systems?	New possibilities What additional opportunities could you create for individual educators?	Potential challenges What kinds of resistance are likely? How can you make a safe space to challenge existing practices?
BELIEFS about diversity and equity			
ACTIONS that support equity			
SYSTEM changes to increase equity			

TEAM LEARNING CONTEXTS

Consider professional learning opportunities that support educators' team learning in your school. These might be grade-level or cross-grade team meetings, vertical content team meetings, leadership teams, lesson study, and other opportunities.

	Equity extensions What existing practices can you adjust to create more opportunities for teams to examine beliefs, actions, and systems?	New possibilities What additional opportunities could you create for teams?	Potential challenges What internal or external barriers challenge teams in doing this work? How can you address them?
BELIEFS about diversity and equity			
ACTIONS that support equity			
SYSTEM changes to increase equity			

TOOLS

EXAMINING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CONTEXTS

WHOLE-SCHOOL LEARNING CONTEXTS

Whole-school professional learning opportunities can also provide important opportunities for change. What practices exist in this context in your school? They might include regularly scheduled faculty meetings, school-based instructional rounds or learning walks, school partnership activities, or others.

	Equity extensions How do whole-school learning opportunities in your school shape educators' beliefs, actions, and systems? How can they prioritize equity more?	New possibilities What additional opportunities could you create?	Potential challenges What unique challenges do whole-school learning opportunities present? How can you prevent, overcome, or discuss them?
BELIEFS about diversity and equity			
ACTIONS that support equity			
SYSTEM changes to increase equity			

PART 2: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND PLANNING

After examining opportunities, possibilities, and challenges for incorporating an equity lens into professional learning, consider the following questions and discuss in small groups, in leadership team meetings, or other settings you use to move professional learning forward.

Do educators have ample and adequate opportunities to explore necessary changes at all three levels — beliefs, actions, and systems?

Which types of professional learning — individual, team, or whole-school — provide the most opportunities for equity work? Should this balance be recalibrated going forward?

Looking across the three types of professional learning and three levels of change, what are the most commonly identified challenges? What strategies can you use to address them?

What will be your immediate next step in helping all educators in your school develop an equity lens?



Connect. Belong. Support.

UPDATES

**"State
coalitions
tackle
professional
learning
challenges"**

p. **70**

STATE COALITIONS FOCUS ON CHANGE

Coalitions in three states are testing school-based change strategies they have developed over the past several months through research, data analysis, and defining a contextualized problem of practice.

Maryland, Ohio, and Rhode Island are participants in the What Matters Now Network. Each state's work is led by a cross-system group of stakeholders using improvement strategies such as rapid-cycle testing that will lead to sustainable practice-based solutions that have implications for improving policy.

UPDATES



Gates Foundation grant targets 8th-grade math proficiency in North Texas

Learning Forward, in partnership with Educate Texas, a public-private initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas, and the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, has been selected by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as an inaugural recipient of a Networks for School Improvement grant.

The team will establish the first-ever Texas Network for School Improvement Collaborative (TXNSI Collaborative) with the one-year, \$500,000 grant, which aims to increase 8th-grade math proficiency — a key indicator in college success — among low-income and minority students at 10 North Texas schools.

The TXNSI Collaborative is one of 19 networks in 13 states using continuous improvement methods to change middle school and high school outcomes, funded by a total of \$92 million in grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

As part of the effort, the collaborative will recruit 10 campuses from several North Texas districts to equip and implement targeted interventions and improvements using a structured continuous improvement process.

Educate Texas, Learning Forward, and the Dana Center will each serve specific roles to ensure the initiative's success.

Educate Texas will serve as the lead network developer, identifying the network of schools, coordinating network communication and convenings, and providing data analysis.

Learning Forward will support the network and participating school teams to implement improvement science concepts to advance schools' progress toward identified goals.

The Dana Center will support the network with subject matter expertise in math education and student success.

“The TXNSI Collaborative is a wonderful opportunity for us to work hand-in-hand with committed partners,” said Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward. “We’re eager to serve the educators who participate in this initiative. We know they want to create meaningful mathematics learning opportunities for all the students who walk through their doors.”

To learn more, visit edtx.org.

STATE COALITIONS TACKLE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CHALLENGES

The What Matters Now Network is underway, with coalitions in three states — Maryland, Ohio, and Rhode Island — testing the school-based change strategies they have developed over the past several months through research, data analysis, and defining a contextualized problem of practice.

Each state is addressing the network's overarching question: How do we put in place job-embedded professional learning grounded in the use of high-quality curriculum and instructional materials that leads to improved and equitable student outcomes?

While addressing this question as a network, each state is taking on its own particularly relevant or pressing challenge, such as supporting teachers to prepare for a new science assessment, building capacity around job-embedded professional learning design and implementation, or increasing educators' access to strategies to improve English language arts instruction.

Each state's work is led by a cross-system coalition of stakeholders that includes state and district policymakers, teachers, principals, university faculty, and nonprofit leaders. The groups use improvement strategies such as rapid-cycle testing that will lead to sustainable practice-based solutions that have implications for improving policy.

Learning Forward is collaborating closely with the coalitions, providing management support, resources, tools, and content expertise.

Partnership supports college and career readiness for low-income students

Learning Forward is working with the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP) to ensure students graduate from high school ready for post-secondary success. NCCEP supports grantees of Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). GEAR UP provides funding to increase the college and career readiness of low-income students in communities nationwide.

Learning Forward will assist in the development of a professional learning system for GEAR UP grantees. Grantees will experience in-person professional learning and have access to online learning modules that will prepare them for the work.

Learning Forward is designing these professional learning training modules, along with tools, resources, and assessments, for grantees who serve in a variety of job roles — college access advisors, directors, coordinators, evaluators, and parent and family engagement specialists.

By joining with NCCEP in designing this professional learning system, Learning Forward is helping ensure that GEAR UP grantees have the necessary skills, capabilities, and infrastructure to make informed decisions based on sound data, research, and evaluations.

Learn more at www.edpartnerships.org.

CELEBRATE STEPHANIE HIRSH AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Learning Forward will host an event honoring Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 4, at the Annual Conference in Dallas, Texas. All participants are invited to join the celebration, which will include music and dancing.

The event is to thank Hirsh, who is retiring after 12 years as executive director and 31 years with Learning Forward.

All proceeds from ticket sales and contributions at the door will support the Learning Forward Foundation, which provides scholarships and other direct support for educators to pursue their professional growth.

Have you registered for the conference yet? Participants who register by October 31 can save up to \$50 per person. The conference, which runs Dec. 1-5, will feature keynote speakers such as Janice Jackson and Glenn Singleton and more than 300 concurrent sessions addressing the most pressing issues for education leaders.

To register, visit **conference.learningforward.org**.



Hirsh

SPOTLIGHT ON LEARNING FORWARD MEMBERS

We are always inspired by the work our members do to create excellent teaching and learning, and we want to share your accomplishments. This month, we recognize two Learning Forward members who have been leaders in their communities.

Kathy O'Neill recently retired after serving for more than 30 years as executive director of Learning Forward's Georgia affiliate. Throughout her career, she led learning in numerous roles, including teacher, curriculum coordinator, superintendent, college professor, instructional technology center director, and director of leadership development.

To recognize and honor O'Neill's advocacy for high-quality professional learning and leadership, Learning Forward Georgia has created a Kathy O'Neill Scholarship that will fund the tuition for one participant to attend each of

its executive leadership program cohorts in the future.

We also congratulate **Maria Warren**, principal in Loudon County Public Schools in Tennessee, who is one of nine finalists for Supervisor of the Year in Tennessee. The award is based on a record of implementing innovative programs and managing and motivating students and faculties. Warren is a Learning Forward member and participant in the Redesign PD Community.

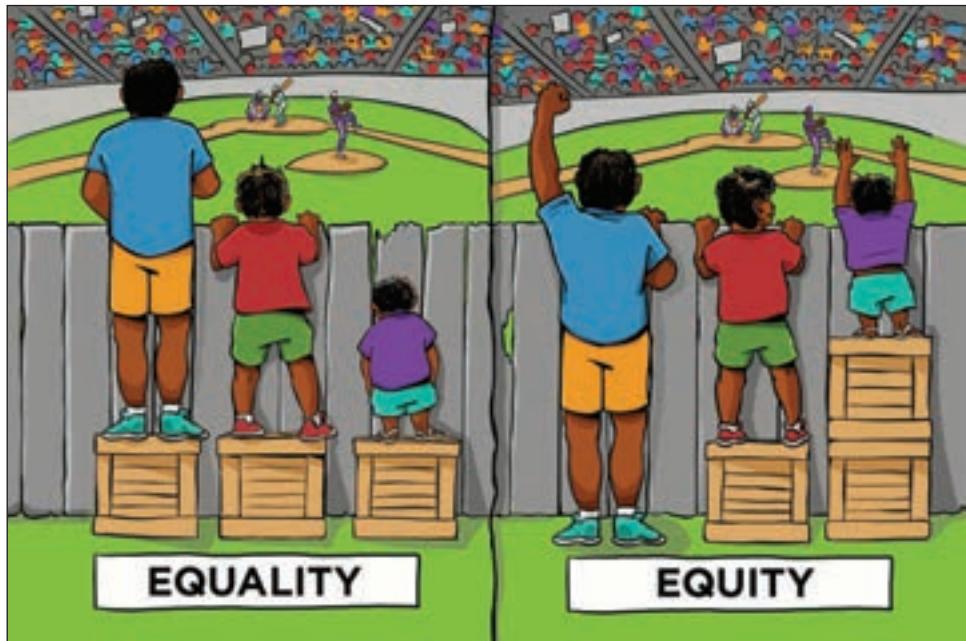
We invite you to share your news and nominate colleagues you think we should highlight in future issues of *The Learning Professional* and other Learning Forward publications.



Warren

AT A GLANCE

WHAT'S MISSING FROM THIS PICTURE?



For many educators, the image above is a familiar representation of the difference between equality and equity. But many people think the graphic could be improved — including the creator of the original version, business professor Craig Froehle.

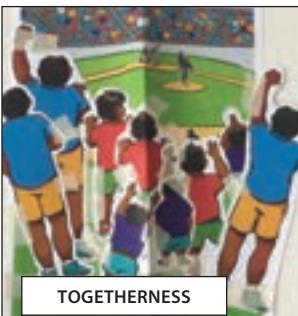
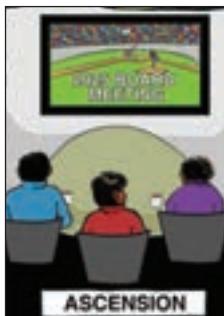
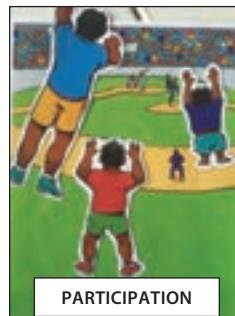
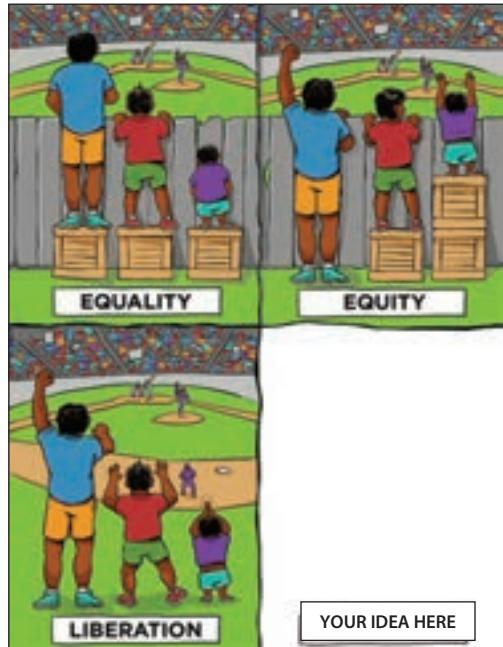
The Center for Story-based Strategy teamed up with the Interaction Institute for Social Change to create #The4thBox tool kit to help educators, students, and others come up with their own version of the image that better represents current realities and needs. The project started after it became clear in workshops and trainings how much the original illustration tends to contain, rather than unleash, participants' imagination about equality and equity.

The tool kit provides paper-craft tools so users can generate new images and discussion tools to facilitate conversations about equity, equality, and the larger concepts of liberation and fulfillment.

The goal of the tool kit is to engage the imagination to make conversations about equity a journey, not a destination.

Here are images that others have created using the tool kit. What else can we add to this conversation?

Find the free tools at www.storybasedstrategy.org/the-4th-box.



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
LEARNING COMMUNITIES	Teacher teams at the Madeline English School improved equity for all students through a long-term, collaborative process (see "Strong teams, strong results" on p. 34). Working together with a data coaching process, teachers challenged one another's thinking and built collective capacity to create a climate of common high expectations. As a result, special education teachers and students feel less isolated and schoolwide achievement has improved.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Which staff members should be included in collaborative teams to help one another examine and reconsider their beliefs about students' abilities?What are the potential pitfalls of comparing data across student subgroups and how can they be avoided or overcome?
RESOURCES	In "Where data lead, success follows" on p. 54, Elizabeth Newman and Hadar Baharav write about a regional collaborative that is pooling resources for professional learning on college readiness. Those resources support consultation from a university-based center that is helping districts use a data-driven inquiry process to build knowledge and capacity relevant to local communities. The collaborative has benefited from both a seed grant and member fees, which help to increase local partners' commitment.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">What resources (financial, logistical, human capital, and other) are available in your area that you haven't considered before?How do professional learning efforts get isolated in geographic and other ways, and what strategies can overcome that isolation?
LEARNING DESIGNS	In "Culturally responsive teaching puts rigor at the center" (p. 40), Zaretta Hammond explains how current research — for example, on brain development, cognition, and intelligence — should undergird efforts to build equity for all students. With this foundation, she explains how academic rigor is a central part of culturally responsive teaching and vice versa.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Why is research on how students learn often overlooked in conversations about racial and other inequities? What are some strategies to integrate it into those conversations in an ongoing way?Why is the concept of "cognitive load" so important to improving rigor and equity?

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



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

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Make plans to attend the
**2018 LEARNING FORWARD
ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**DEC. 1-5, 2018 AT THE GAYLORD TEXAN RESORT
& CONVENTION CENTER IN GRAPEVINE, TEXAS**

You are invited
to attend. We
look forward to
seeing you.

When it comes to advancing educator professional learning, this is THE conference. Join thousands of practitioners and thought leaders to gain valuable connections, tools, learning opportunities, and strategies. Find out more at conference.learningforward.org.

DALLAS 
**2018 ANNUAL
CONFERENCE**
DEC. 1-5, 2018

All learners,
many perspectives,
one community.

