

# JSD

LEARNING  
FORWARD'S  
JOURNAL

THE AUTHORITY ON PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

## Effective teaching

STUDENT  
INPUT  
STRENGTHENS  
TEACHER  
EVALUATIONS p. 24

**A wealth of  
data enriches  
improvement  
efforts in Florida  
district** p. 32

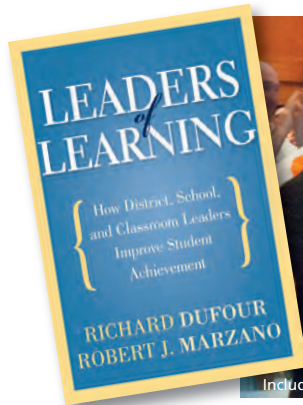
**Q&A with Vicki Phillips**  
WHAT MAKES A GOOD TEACHER?  
Study uses multiple measures  
to dig for answers p. 18



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# JSD

DECEMBER 2011, VOLUME 32, NO. 6

theme EFFECTIVE TEACHING

## 8 UP CLOSE DEEP SMARTS START HERE

- Teacher qualities that matter
- The Measures of Effective Teaching Project
- Tools to guide teacher observers

## 10 The elements of effective teaching:

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING MOVES VISION, FRAMEWORK, AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS INTO ACTION.

**By Joellen Killion and Stephanie Hirsh**

For teachers in classrooms, effective professional learning is the single most powerful pathway to promote continuous improvement in teaching.

## 18 What makes a good teacher?

THE BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION DIGS FOR ANSWERS WITH ITS MEASURES OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING PROJECT.

**By Stephanie Hirsh**

Vicki Phillips from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation talks with Learning Forward about the foundation's investment in effective teaching and the role of professional learning.

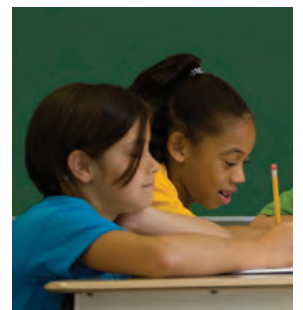


## 24 The view from the seats:

STUDENT INPUT PROVIDES A CLEARER PICTURE OF WHAT WORKS IN SCHOOLS.

**By Tracy Crow**

A framework called the Seven C's is delivering data on student engagement, opening the door to improved professional learning.



## 32 Measurement makeover:

FLORIDA DISTRICT REVAMPS TEACHER EVALUATION TO FOCUS ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.

**By Valerie von Frank**

Hillsborough County (Fla.) Public Schools' new teacher evaluation system uses multiple measures, including peer and mentor observations and student learning data.



## departments

### 4 FROM THE EDITOR

BY TRACY CROW

### 6 ESSENTIALS KEEPING UP WITH HOT TOPICS

IN THE FIELD

• State policy and data



- Improving rural schools
- Teacher leaders speak out
- Union-management partnerships
- Sharing resources
- Public school reform
- Expanded-time schools
- Induction and retention

### 53 TOOL

Integrating individual professional learning into comprehensive learning systems.

### 59 CULTURAL PROFICIENCY

BY PATRICIA L. GUERRA  
AND SARAH W. NELSON

The ability to value diversity requires extensive, ongoing learning experiences.

### 61 COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

BY SUSAN SCOTT

AND DELI MOUSSAVI-BOCK

Vulnerability is power in leadership and relationships.

### 63 learningforward.org

Site highlights.

### 64 ABSTRACTS

for December 2011 *JSD*

### 66 @ LEARNING FORWARD

NEWS AND NOTES

- New trustees elected
- Book Club selection
- On Board: Mark Diaz offers a recipe for effectiveness
- Kentucky selected for Common Core project
- Learning Forward Awards 2011



### 72 FROM THE DIRECTOR

BY STEPHANIE HIRSH



### 40 Lessons from D.C.'s evaluation system:

TEACHERS GIVE IMPACT LOW MARKS ON SUPPORT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

**By Susan Headdan and Elena Silva**

D.C.'s controversial evaluation system is making strides, but critics say it falls short on what teachers need most.

### 46 Rising above the floodwaters:

TAP HELPS LOUISIANA SCHOOL REBUILD PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM.

**By Anthony Armstrong**

Since Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005, N.P. Trist Middle School in Meraux, La., has survived and thrived, and was recently recognized by the TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement for its gains in student and teacher learning.





## Professional learning's impact comes from alignment across subjects, grades, and buildings

When we talk about teacher evaluation through the Learning Forward lens, our goal is that standards-based professional learning will provide the context for how school and district leaders respond to the data that evaluation systems generate. As David Steele, chief information and technology officer of

Hillsborough County (Fla.) Public Schools, says, "Teacher evaluation is the centerpiece to the extent that it gets

publicized in that way, but any of us would say the professional development is the centerpiece" (see "Measurement makeover" on p. 32).

However, not every school system takes this holistic view or uses this kind of language. In different systems and contexts, the professional learning sidekick to teacher evaluation is labeled and framed in ways that portray an entirely different attitude. As a result, some teachers envision the professional development that accompanies teacher evaluation as remedial, designed to address their particular deficiencies in a vacuum. It's time to shift away from this perspective and seek alignment

•  
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among individual, team or school, and systemwide learning.

More than 20 years ago, Dennis Sparks and Susan Loucks-Horsley wrote an article in this publication that has since become foundational to educators' understanding of different models of staff development, as it was then termed. "Five models of staff development for teachers" (1989) described the types of professional development that teachers participated in and provided context and research information about each model.

One of their models, individually guided staff development, is useful to examine during a time when systems are working to most effectively couple teacher evaluation and professional learning. As they wrote, "Individually guided staff development refers to a process through which teachers plan for and pursue activities they believe will promote their own learning" (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989, p. 41). The research base for the model shares many of the same emphases as the Learning Designs standard from the recently released Standards for Professional Learning, stressing the importance of recognizing that learners are at different stages of expertise and readiness and that they learn in different ways.

As the standards emphasize, and as Sparks and Loucks-Horsley recognized, such individually oriented learning is but one aspect of professional learning that has the potential to change educator

performance and increase student results.

We know that professional learning cannot start and end with the individual teacher, nor can a teacher's desires and assessment be the sole driver of the learning in which he or she participates. The data informing professional learning comes from many sources, and students' needs are paramount to those of the teacher. Just as important, the professional learning with the most impact for the most students is collaborative, sustained, and aligned across subjects, grades, and buildings.

Remembering to keep the improvement of the individual, the team or school, and the entire district in mind certainly makes for complex evaluation systems, as you'll read about in this issue of *JSD*. You'll find that there are school districts using learning systems that strike this balance, and as information emerges from such districts, more educators will have the tools to follow their lead.

We offer gratitude to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for its support of this issue of *JSD* and of other Learning Forward efforts to disseminate information from the foundation's significant investment in understanding teacher effectiveness.

### REFERENCE

**Sparks, D. & Loucks-Horsley, S. (1989, Fall).** Five models of staff development for teachers. *Journal of Staff Development*, 10(4), 40-57. ■



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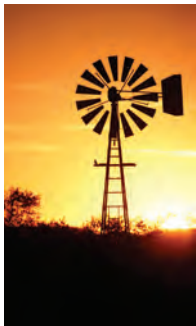


## RURAL SCHOOL LEADERS

### Transforming the Rural South: A Roadmap to Improving Rural Education

*State Collaborative on Reforming  
Education (SCORE), August 2011*

In rural schools that experience success in improving student achievement, school leadership has a large role to play. However, in rural areas, administrators often lack access to robust professional learning communities due to the small number of administrators in their systems and physical distance



between administrators in other districts. SCORE recommends that state departments of education use technology to connect school leaders across districts so they can share best practices and assist districts in providing high-quality professional learning for current and future rural school leaders.

[www.tnscore.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/SCORE-Rural-Education-Roadmap.pdf](http://www.tnscore.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/SCORE-Rural-Education-Roadmap.pdf)

## SHARING RESOURCES

**Teacher Professional Learning  
as the Growth of Social Capital**  
*Current Issues in Education,*  
Sept. 13, 2011

Authors Wesley Johnson, David Lustick, and MinJeong Kim explore the individual and social aspects of teacher learning. They define social capital as the resources teachers can access through peer collaboration to support their ongoing learning. Their findings indicate that conceptualizing professional learning as the growth of shared resources can avoid some of the difficulties that arise when teacher learning is viewed solely as either an individual or social process.

<http://cie.asu.edu/ojs/index.php/cieatasu/article/view/781/238>

## STATE POLICY AND DATA

### Using Data to Improve Teacher Effectiveness: A Primer for State Policymakers *Data Quality Campaign, July 2011*

Data Quality Campaign is a national effort to encourage and support state policymakers to improve the availability and use of high-quality education data to improve student achievement. This report outlines five areas of priority: Collect and link key data on students and teachers at the state level; implement policies and practices that support a high-quality teacher-student data link; provide educators with timely access to data; ensure that educators receive training on data use to improve student achievement; and implement state policies to ensure that teacher preparation programs use data to improve their programs and train teacher candidates to use data.



[www.dataqualitycampaign.org/files/DQC-TE-primer-July6-low-res.pdf](http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/files/DQC-TE-primer-July6-low-res.pdf)

## TEACHER LEADERS SPEAK OUT

### Teaching Effectiveness for the New Millennium *Center for Teaching Quality, September 2011*

This report is the result of behind-the-scenes conversations between 23 teacher leaders and U.S. Department of Education officials, including Secretary Arne Duncan. Drawing on research and their classroom expertise, the teacher leaders recommend putting a higher priority on formative assessments and high-quality professional learning. Longer-term recommendations include using funds for principal leadership to support collaboration with teacher leaders and training highly qualified evaluators; developing hybrid roles that would enable teachers to innovate within their schools, districts, and states; and inviting teachers to take more prominent roles in policymaking.

[www.teachingquality.org/sites/default/files/CTQ-ED\\_Policy\\_Brief\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.teachingquality.org/sites/default/files/CTQ-ED_Policy_Brief_FINAL.pdf)

## UNION-MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIPS

### Collaborating on School Reform:

### Creating Union-Management Partnerships to Improve Public School Systems *Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations, October 2010*

The authors focus on six diverse school districts — ABC Unified School District, Cerritos, Calif.; Toledo, Ohio; Hillsborough, Fla.; Plattsburgh, N.Y.; Norfolk, Va.; St. Francis, Minn. — that have long-term experience in creating a collaborative approach to school improvement. Researchers visited each district, interviewing union and school officials, teachers, and members of the business community as well as reviewing contracts, memorandums of understanding, student performance data, and internal reports. The report notes that all of these districts invested heavily in creating opportunities for union leaders and administrators to learn together through shared experiences, building relationships as colleagues with overlapping interests who can work together to improve teaching and learning.



<http://smlr.rutgers.edu/collaborating-school-reform>

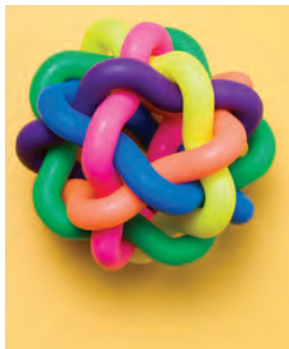


**PUBLIC SCHOOL REFORM****The Missing Link in School Reform**

*Stanford Social Innovation Review, Stanford University, Fall 2011*

Author Carrie R. Leana reports findings from a research project following 1,000 4th- and 5th-grade teachers in New York City public schools between 2005 and 2007, examining one-year changes in student math scores. The results point to three avenues for public school reform: 1) The teaching staff is engaged in school reform collectively; 2) trust and meaningful communication among teachers are the bases of true reform efforts; and 3) the principal supports teacher reform efforts through building external relations.

[www.ssireview.org/images/articles/Missing\\_Link\\_Cover.pdf](http://www.ssireview.org/images/articles/Missing_Link_Cover.pdf)

**USING TIME WISELY****Time Well Spent: Eight Powerful Practices of Successful, Expanded-Time Schools**

*National Center on Time & Learning*

NCTL's report outlines specific practices that can lead to dramatic increases in student achievement and preparation for success in college and the workforce. Time Well Spent offers an in-depth examination of 30 expanded-time schools serving high-poverty populations with impressive track records of student success, and demonstrates how these schools leverage their additional time in order to implement other critical reforms. The report summarizes eight powerful practices of time-expanded schools, including: Make every minute count; use time to build a school culture of high expectations and mutual accountability; use time to continuously strengthen instruction; and use time to relentlessly assess, analyze, and respond to student data.



[www.timeandlearning.org/?q=node/102](http://www.timeandlearning.org/?q=node/102)

**INDUCTION AND RETENTION****A System Approach to Building a World-Class Teaching Profession: The Role of Induction**

*Alliance for Excellent Education, October 2011*

To build a world-class teaching profession for the nation's students, officials must develop strategies to reduce the rates in which teachers leave the profession and fix the unequal distribution of teaching talent between richer and poorer schools. This policy brief, written with the support of MetLife Foundation, recommends developing systems that encourage high-quality educator development; designing comprehensive mentor programs for new teachers; determining reliable performance indicators that can provide feedback to support professional learning; and creating organizational conditions conducive to meaningful staff collaboration and development.

[www.all4ed.org/files/TeacherInduction.pdf](http://www.all4ed.org/files/TeacherInduction.pdf)

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## What qualities matter in a teacher?

In summarizing the research on what specific teacher qualities contribute to higher teaching ratings and improved student results, Linda Darling-Hammond identified the following important qualities for an effective teacher. Teachers need:

- Strong general intelligence and verbal ability to help explain ideas and observe diagnostically;
- Strong content knowledge at a level that relates to what they are teaching;
- Knowledge of how to teach in that content area, in particular how to use hands-on learning techniques and how to develop higher-order thinking skills;
- An understanding of learners and their learning and development, including how to assess learning, how to



support students with a range of abilities and differences, including those who aren't proficient in the language of instruction; and

- Adaptive expertise to make judgments about what works in different contexts and for different needs.

Darling-Hammond notes that many researchers and educators would include on this list dispositions that include the willingness and ability to teach in an unbiased manner, adapt instruction as needed, continue to learn and improve, and collaborate with other professionals and parents for the sake of individual students and the school as a whole.

**Source: Darling-Hammond, L. (2007, July).** *Recognizing and enhancing teacher effectiveness: A policy maker's guide.* In L. Darling-Hammond & C.D. Prince (Eds.), *Strengthening teacher quality in high-need schools — policy and practice.* Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

## UNDERSTANDING THE MEASURES



### REPORTS

The Measures of Effective Teaching Project has published reports with preliminary findings as well as complete background papers outlining the different components of the project. Learn more at [www.metproject.org](http://www.metproject.org)

**F**unded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the goal of the Measures of Effective Teaching Project is to identify how teaching can be measured effectively and fairly. Through direct work and research with thousands of teachers in several predominantly urban districts, the project is examining multiple measures of teacher effectiveness. Data from the following sources is being collected and analyzed for the teacher-participants in the study:

- Students' performance on standardized state and supplemental assessments;
- Video-based classroom observation and teachers' reflections on these lessons;
- Teachers' pedagogical content knowledge — an assessment of a teacher's ability to recognize and diagnose students' misunderstandings of the lessons;
- Students' perceptions of the instructional environment in the classroom; and
- Teachers' perceptions of the working conditions and instructional support at their schools.

### THREE PROTOCOLS

In addition to the more general teaching frameworks described at right, the Measures of Effective Teaching Project also relies on three content-specific protocols. Learn about

1. Mathematical Quality of Instruction rubric;
2. Protocol for Language Arts Teaching Observation; and
3. Quality Science Teaching rubric.

[www.metproject.org](http://www.metproject.org)



## SET THE STAGE FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

With a focus on engagement, “we’re making the point that we care,” Ferguson says. That caring goes beyond test scores. While some teaching strategies may improve test performance, they may not contribute to longer-term learning. “Most of us as parents would sacrifice a few points on a test in exchange for more happiness,” he says. “We want to build a love of learning, not just maximize the score of the next test coming up.”

**quotable**

Read more in “The view from the seats” on p. 24.

IN THIS ISSUE OF *JSD*

## THE LEARNING STARTS HERE ▼

If you're interested in ...	Start with the article on page ...
• TEACHER evaluation systems	24, 32, 40, 46
• ENSURING a systemwide context for professional learning	10, 72
• ROLE of student voice	24
• MEASURES of Effective Teaching Project	18, 24, 32
• DISTRICT examples	32, 40, 46
• TEAM discussion protocols	53

## OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING PROJECT

### TOOLS TO GUIDE TEACHER OBSERVERS

As school systems work to develop not only evaluation systems but also the professional learning that builds educator capacity systemwide, they use and adapt a range of tools to identify important components or elements of teaching and instruction. These tools help districts to structure conversations and expectations. In the Measures of Effective Teaching Project, researchers have used the tools below to guide teacher observers. Schools and districts beyond the project have used the frameworks for their own purposes for years.

#### FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING

Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching is a research-based set of components of instruction aligned to the InTASC standards and grounded in a constructivist view of learning and teaching. The Measures of Effective Teaching Project focuses on domains 2 and 3.

Learn more at [www.danielsongroup.org](http://www.danielsongroup.org).

#### DOMAIN 1

##### Planning and preparation

- 1a Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy
- 1b Demonstrating knowledge of students
- 1c Setting instructional outcomes
- 1d Demonstrating knowledge of resources
- 1e Designing coherent instruction
- 1f Designing student assessments

#### DOMAIN 2

##### Classroom environment

- 2a Creating an environment of respect and rapport
- 2b Establishing a culture for learning
- 2c Managing classroom procedures
- 2d Managing student behavior
- 2e Organizing physical space

#### DOMAIN 3

##### Instruction

- 3a Communicating with students
- 3b Using questioning and discussion techniques
- 3c Engaging students in learning
- 3d Using assessment in instruction
- 3e Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness

#### DOMAIN 4

##### Professional responsibilities

- 4a Reflecting on teaching
- 4b Maintaining accurate records
- 4c Communicating with families
- 4d Participating in a professional community
- 4e Growing and developing professionally
- 4f Showing professionalism

#### CLASS OBSERVATION TOOL

The CLASS observation tool, based on research from Bob Pianta and colleagues, helps educators break down the complexity of teaching and focus on interacting effectively with students, no matter what grade or subject they teach. The elements included here are representative.

Learn more at [www.teachstone.org](http://www.teachstone.org).

- Emotional support
- Positive climate
- Negative climate
- Teacher sensitivity
- Regard for student perspectives

##### Classroom organization

- Behavior management
- Productivity
- Instructional learning formats

##### Instructional support

- Concept development
- Quality of feedback
- Language modeling
- Content understanding
- Analysis and problem solving
- Instructional dialogue

# THE ELEMENTS of EFFECTIVE TEACHING

**Professional learning moves vision, framework, and performance standards into action**

**By Joellen Killion and Stephanie Hirsh**

**S**tudent success depends on effective teaching — not just occasionally, but every day in every classroom and school. Effective teaching impacts students' academic, physical, social-emotional, and behavioral well-being. Effective teaching occurs best when all education stakeholders, including parents, policymakers, community members, and educators, share responsibility for continuous improvement and student achievement. For teachers in classrooms, effective professional learning is the single most powerful pathway to promote continuous improvement in teaching.

Consistently great teaching — every day, in every classroom, and in every school — emerges from a clear vision for teaching and learning. This vision is then translated into an instructional framework that details rigorous outcomes for student and educator performance. The framework and outcomes form the basis for the system for professional learning that makes them possible.

A vision for teaching and learning describes how students experience learning and the role of teaching in achieving that vision. Such a vision is grounded in learning theories and models selected to explain how learning happens, who the learners are, and the context in which students learn. The vision emerges from communitywide

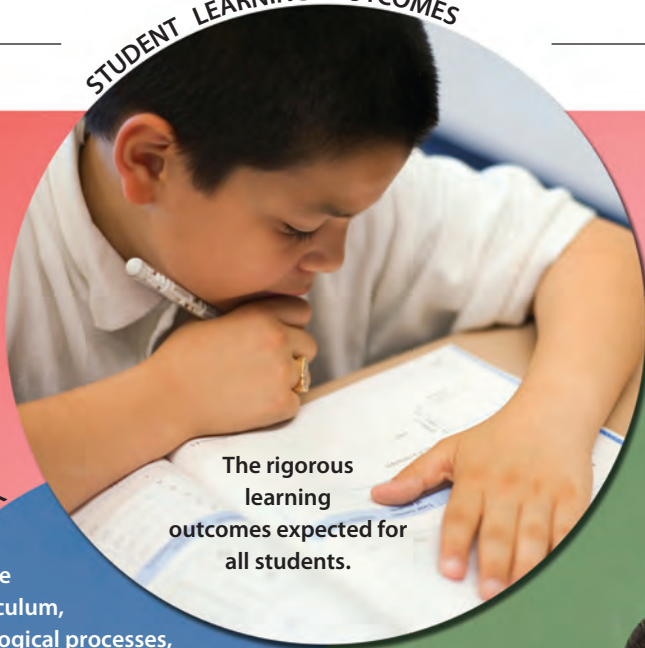
conversations among stakeholders who come together to describe the learning experience they want for students to prepare them for the future.

The following sample vision, based on the work of a national task force, describes teaching and learning based on the possibilities available through technology. Once a district establishes a vision, an instructional framework moves the vision from a dream to reality by describing how to achieve it.

“Imagine a high school student in the year 2015. She has grown up in a world where learning is as accessible through technologies at home as it is in the classroom, and digital content is as real to her as paper, lab equipment, or textbooks. At school, she and her classmates engage in creative problem-solving activities by manipulating simulations in a virtual laboratory or by downloading and analyzing visualizations of real-time data from remote sensors. Away from the classroom, she has seamless access to school materials and homework assignments using inexpensive mobile technologies. She continues to collaborate with her classmates in virtual environments that allow not only social interaction but also rich connections with a wealth of supplementary content. Her teacher can track her progress over the course of a lesson plan and compare her performance across a lifelong ‘digital portfolio,’ making note of areas that need additional attention through personalized assignments and alerting parents to specific



STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES



The rigorous learning outcomes expected for all students.

EDUCATOR PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

What educators should know and be able to do to be effective in their roles.



INSTRUCTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The curriculum, pedagogical processes, assessment for learning, classroom environment, and the school-and classroom-based support and collaboration for continuous educator improvement.



# Vision for teaching and learning

How students will experience learning, the role of teachers and other educators in the learning process, and the learning context designed to meet the unique needs of the community's students.



concerns” (National Science Foundation Task Force on Cyberlearning, 2008, p. 5).

Whether an instructional framework is detailed or simple, it guides instructional decisions and builds accountability and consistency into learning experiences to improve results for students. See the sidebar below for examples of what such frameworks might include.

Visions for teaching and learning and instructional frameworks must be coupled with rigorous outcomes for student learning that specify what students are expected to know and be able to do as well as performance standards for educators. The Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics become an essential component of effective teaching because they specify the expectations for student learning. Without clearly articulated outcomes, teaching may be fragmented or unfocused. These standards have been fully adopted in 44 states and the District of Columbia and partially adopted in one additional state; variations of these standards exist in other states or in individual school systems.

### VISIONS REQUIRE FRAMEWORKS

Learn about three frameworks and the kinds of elements they encompass as school systems strive to fulfill visions for teaching and learning.



#### • District of Columbia Public Schools

provides a teaching and learning framework that incorporates three fundamental components — plan, teach, and increase effectiveness. The framework’s purpose is to outline clear expectations, align professional learning, and support educator assessment.

[www.dc.gov/DCPS/About+DCPS/Strategic+Documents/Teaching+and+Learning+Framework](http://www.dc.gov/DCPS/About+DCPS/Strategic+Documents/Teaching+and+Learning+Framework)

• **West Metro Education Program** in Minneapolis, Minn., has a three-part instructional framework that incorporates relationships and respect, meaningful and relevant learning, and high expectations and excellence.

<https://sites.google.com/a/wmep.k12.mn.us/wmep-k12-mn-us/instructional-framework>

• **The University of Washington’s** Center for Educational Leadership 5D framework — purpose, student engagement, curriculum and pedagogy, assessment for student learning, and classroom environment and culture — provides critical questions for school and district leaders to consider as they observe the teaching and learning process.

<http://tpep-wa.org/resources/instructional-frameworks/uwcel-5d>

### ASSESSMENT MATTERS

Generating a vision, developing an instructional framework, and delineating student learning outcomes by themselves are insufficient to produce effective teaching. Effective teaching requires not only explicit performance standards for educators but also processes for improving and assessing effective practice. Performance standards for teachers define instructional expectations and inform the individual improvement and criteria for measuring effectiveness. The Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC), a collaborative of more than 30 states, provides model teacher standards for individual states and districts to use in developing their own performance standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011). Others have contributed standards for effective teaching that are used as the basis for developing performance criteria such as those defined in *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching* (Danielson, 2007) and *Classroom Assessment Scoring System* (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008). For school leaders, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium provides model standards for school leaders (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008). These standards contribute to a rich vision for leadership, teaching, and learning to establish a process of continuous improvement. See the diagram that demonstrates this relationship on p. 11.

Effective teaching emerges from a vision for teaching and learning, an instructional framework, standards for student learning, and performance expectations for educators coupled with a convergence of policy, planning, and goals at the state, school system, and school levels. Educators, policymakers, community members, and decision makers work collaboratively to develop and implement these components that serve as the backbone of effective teaching. Yet without professional learning to support implementation, these components are relegated to words on pages rather than actions in classrooms.

Effective teaching is possible in every classroom by ensuring every educator experiences substantive professional learning within a culture of collaboration and shared accountability. Effectiveness in teaching is a journey, rather than a destination. Each year, teachers experience new challenges to refine and expand their teaching practices. Each year, teachers face new students with different learning needs. They strive to implement new technologies in their classrooms to accelerate learning. Benchmarks for student learning continue to change. New research on effective instruction is released. New colleagues and leaders join the faculty to support teaching practice and student learning. Systems of professional learning are the only way to ensure these challenges become opportunities to improve student and educator performance.

Absent professional learning, teachers lack access to the information and support they need to refine and enrich teaching throughout their career. At each stage along the career continuum, effective teaching broadens from the core elements





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of teaching to include expanded responsibilities of a master or mentor teacher whose work includes supporting peers and assuming leadership roles within their schools and beyond that focus on improving student learning. Professional learning is the only strategy in school systems that moves the vision, instructional framework, standards for students, and standards for educators into action.

**COMMON ATTRIBUTES**

Effective professional learning for effective teaching has seven core attributes, which Learning Forward has defined as Standards for Professional Learning. Professional learning that doesn't include these attributes is unlikely to produce the same high level of results for educators and their students that effective professional learning will. (See the full list of the Standards for Professional Learning below.)

A common attribute of effective schools is collaboration among educators. Engagement in one or more learning communities provides teachers opportunities to moderate their practice and expectations with their peers, to examine and reflect on their work together, to learn from one another, to challenge one another professionally, and to solve complex problems within the context of their unique work environment. Learning communities generate collective responsibility and accountability for effective teaching and student learning and engage teachers in school-based, ongoing learning focused on strengthening teachers' day-to-day practice and reducing variation in the effectiveness of teaching from classroom to classroom within a school so that every student, regardless of his or her classroom, experiences the same high level of teaching each day.

Students benefit when teachers learn from peers. C. Ki-

rabo Jackson & Elias Bruegmann (2009) report that when the quality of a teacher's colleagues improve, the students of that teacher benefit. These results occur most likely because teachers organize the focus of learning within their communities on challenges relevant to their students' success. Effective teaching and student learning are the benefits that spread from classroom to classroom and even from school to school.

Effective teaching requires skillful leadership to build capacity and structures to support learning. Leaders, both administrators and teachers, advocate professional learning as a key lever for continuous improvement of teaching and student results. While individual teachers may engage in professional learning aligned to their professional goals, universal effectiveness in teaching depends on making it a priority within a school or school system, creating a culture and systems to support it, and developing teacher leaders to skillfully facilitate collaborative learning.

In addition to leadership, successful schools and school systems invest resources to support effective teaching. Some of these resources include time for professional learning and collaboration, classroom- and school-based support in the form of coaching, technology to seek information, models, networks, and research, and access to external experts who provide specialized knowledge and skill development when the needed expertise is unavailable within the school or district. The effects of these resource investments can be measured in increased student achievement.

Measures of increased effectiveness in teaching and student achievement depend on the use of formative and summative assessments that provide data about teaching performance and student achievement. These data plus data gleaned from

**STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

**Learning Communities:**

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.

**Leadership:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful

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

**Resources:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.

**Data:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data



to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.

**Learning Designs:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

**Implementation:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for

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

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

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examining student work and engagement, individual and collaborative teacher reflection, coaching, and other forms of peer interactions provide both informal and formal data that inform decisions related to improving teaching. These data also provide information to link results for students with changes in teaching practices. Without a regular stream of data about multiple variables related to effective teaching and student learning, teachers, their peers, and supervisors lack valid, reliable, and tangible evidence about effective teaching. These data provide a continuous stream of information against which teachers benchmark their progress and continuous improvement. Because of the significance of data in teaching and professional learning, effective teaching requires extensive assessment literacy and skill in using data to identify, plan, and measure the effects of ongoing professional learning.

**Data allow teachers to identify the focus for their professional learning.**

Data allow teachers to identify the focus for their professional learning. The effectiveness of the learning experience is measured not only by the content, but also by the design of the learning experience. When professional learning for teachers models effective teaching practices, particularly those that are aligned with the vision of teaching and learning and the instructional framework, those engaged in the learning have an added advantage of learning both the content and processes about learning. Effective designs integrate learning theories and research and foster active engagement and collaboration with colleagues. Learning designs vary to accommodate the expected outcomes, learners' preferences, experience levels, school culture, and other factors. Teaching practices are enhanced through mentoring, coaching, and team learning that focus on clearly defined outcomes for teachers and their students.

Learning transfers to practice when mentors, coaches, and team members provide school- and classroom-based support sustained over time that draws on research about individual and organization change. Frequently, efforts to refine or extend teaching practices fail because the improved practices are not fully implemented with fidelity to the design. The use of constructive feedback based on predetermined criteria that describe effective teaching is also essential to continuous improvement of teaching.

### CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Performance standards such as those described by Charlotte Danielson, Robert C. Pianta, Karen M. La Paro, and Bridget K. Hamre, InTASC's model core teaching standards, or state or district performance standards become an integral part of efforts to increase teaching effectiveness. Standards such as these align closely with the vision for teaching and learning and the instructional framework and define excellence in teaching. Coupling performance standards with student learn-

ing outcomes such as those defined in the Common Core State Standards creates a coherent set of criteria for both practice and results of effective teaching.

Effectiveness in teaching is a process of continuous learning that occurs over time without a termination point. As described in the InTASC standard 9, Professional Learning and Ethical Practice — “The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his or her practice, particularly the effects of his or her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner” (Council of Chief State School Officers, p. 18) — effective teaching includes reflection using data, engaging in professional learning, and adapting practice to meet the learning needs of students.

School systems have responsibilities to develop and embrace a vision for teaching and learning, adopt an instructional framework that guides how the vision moves into action, and establish standards that serve as the criteria for measuring effectiveness. Effective teaching results from comprehensive efforts of the entire community who come together to create the core components of a state and local system for teaching effectiveness. This system is fundamental to guarantee that every student, not just some, experiences effective teaching every day, and every educator, not just some, understands his or her role in increasing student achievement.

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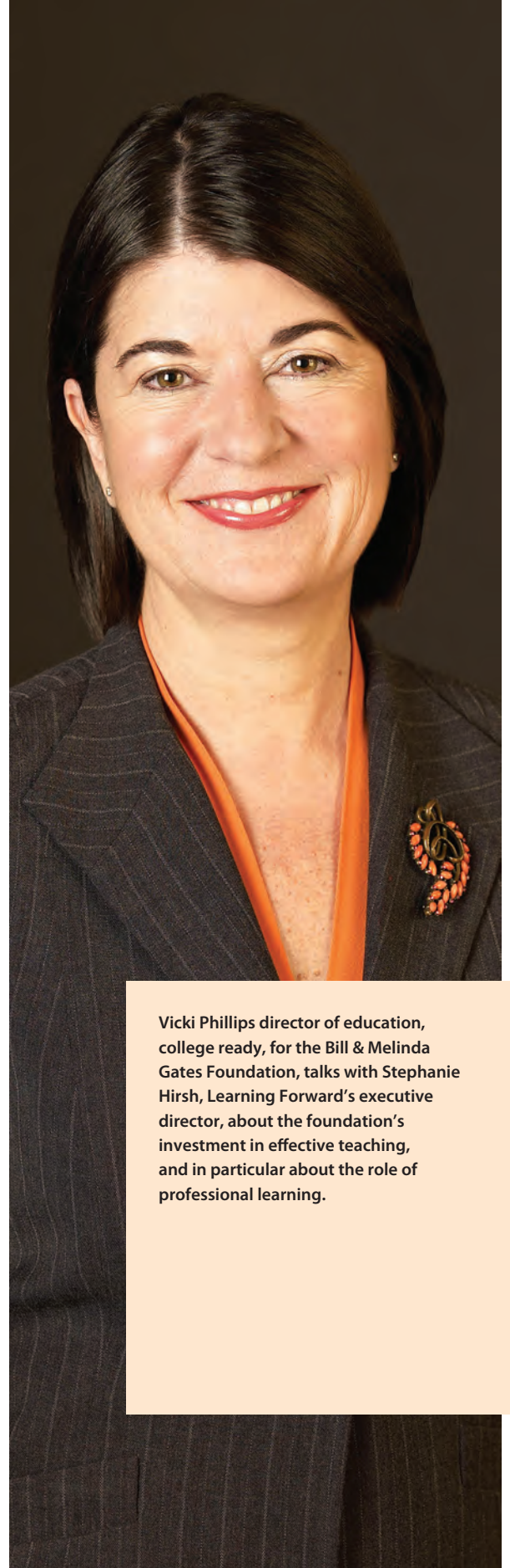
The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation digs for answers with its Measures of Effective Teaching project

By Stephanie Hirsh

**J**SD: This issue of *JSD* is about effective teaching, with a focus on professional learning. Given that focus, what would you want readers to know about the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's investment in effective teaching?

**Phillips:** Great teachers are the most important school-based ingredient for student success. So we're committed to ensuring teachers have the supports and tools they need to continually improve their practice. As we do so, we're listening closely to what teachers say and co-designing and researching new approaches with them.

Through the Measures of Effective Teaching study, we're working with 3,000 teachers in seven districts around the country to look at multiple measures for understanding what makes a good teacher so that all teachers can improve. We've also made deep investments in four sites — Memphis, Tenn.; Hillsborough County, Fla.; Pittsburgh, Pa.; and a group of charter management organizations in Los Angeles — that are dramatically rethinking how they recruit, develop, and retain teachers, particularly for our need-



Vicki Phillips director of education, college ready, for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, talks with Stephanie Hirsh, Learning Forward's executive director, about the foundation's investment in effective teaching, and in particular about the role of professional learning.



iest students. In Hillsborough County, for example, novice teachers get two full years of support from accomplished mentor teachers, and that is already boosting retention rates.

We're also supporting two design collaborations, one in mathematics and one in literacy, which have been developing and piloting the formative assessments teachers need to understand where students are relative to the Common Core State Standards, the lessons to move students forward, and the rich classroom-based assignments that demonstrate student progress. These design teams involve subject-matter experts, education leaders, and classroom teachers so that the tools are grounded in the realities of teachers' classrooms. And the tools are being continually refined based on teachers' knowledge and feedback. If teachers don't shape and own changes in practice, then frankly, they're not going to happen.

### **JSD: Where does professional learning fit in the foundation's effective teaching agenda?**

**Phillips:** We want to create systems that support good teachers, help average teachers get better, and ensure that new teachers learn the profession so they can become good. Like you, we believe that when educator practice improves, students have a greater likelihood of achieving results. However, we know that a lot of existing professional development does not meet teachers' needs or match Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning. Our hope is that the Measures of Effective

learning, both individually and collectively. For example, Pittsburgh has created new positions for teachers, known as clinical resident instructors, to support the development of other teachers in the district. Teams of teachers in the high schools are working collaboratively to help cohorts of 9th- and 10th-graders get off to a good start in high school and stay on a trajectory toward college. In addition, we think that technology can help reshape professional development in ways that provide teachers with much more immediate, personalized feedback and enable teachers to learn from each other, not just within a school but across schools, districts, and states.

### **JSD: What have you learned so far about professional learning from your investment?**

**Phillips:** We are in the exploratory stage of our investments, testing delivery options and tools, analyzing the current offerings in the marketplace, and exploring ways to address the pressure around resource needs.

There are three things we have learned: 1) Districts want to provide meaningful, differentiated learning opportunities for teachers tied to informal and formal feedback; 2) teachers want meaningful opportunities to engage with their peers, coaches, and individually to improve their practice; and 3) despite the array of professional development programs, there's not a systemic approach to supporting teachers from induction to retirement.

## **VICKI PHILLIPS**

In her role at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Vicki Phillips oversees work to ensure U.S. high school students graduate ready to succeed and to improve access to college. Phillips has built a strong education reform record throughout her career, at all levels — from neighborhood schools to the federal government. For nearly three decades, she has endeavored to improve education, as a teacher, state-level policymaker, leader of a nonprofit education foundation, superintendent of a large urban

school district, and now as the director of education for the foundation.

Before joining the foundation, she was superintendent of Portland Public Schools in Portland, Ore. Earlier, Phillips served as Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell's secretary of education and that state's chief state school officer. She previously served at the state level in her home state of Kentucky, helping to implement the sweeping changes demanded by the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990. Phillips has worked with the U.S. Office of Education in Washington, D.C. She has also been a middle and high

school teacher.

Born in Kentucky and raised on a small farm, Phillips was the first in her family to go to college, and earned a bachelor's degree in elementary and special education and a master's degree in school psychology from Western Kentucky University. She also holds a doctorate in educational leadership and management from the University of Lincoln in England and served as a founding member of the governing council for England's National College for School Leadership.

Teaching study will support the creation of teacher development and evaluation systems that give teachers much more accurate, fine-grained information to help improve their practice. And the sites we have invested in are examining new ways to support teachers' continued

And, we also know that teachers want to have a say in their professional learning plans and experiences.

### **JSD: Tell me what you're excited about in this work.**

**Phillips:** We're really excited about what we've heard

from teachers who have been involved in the literacy and math design collaboratives about what a powerful growth experience that has been for them. More than nine in 10 teachers involved in the pilots reported that using the literacy and math tools provided them with new information about their students' knowledge and skills, including a better understanding of students' strengths and weaknesses as readers and writers, and that the resulting student work increased their expectations for what students can do.

Similarly, we've heard from teachers involved in the Measures of Effective Teaching project that the chance to look at videos of their own practice has been a powerful and sometimes eye-opening learning experience.

We're also really excited about how digital professional development tools and services can provide a vast ecosystem of support for teachers. In the past 10 years, we have seen the expansion of online professional learning and grassroots, teacher-generated, online collaboration tools, such as Edmodo. Professional learning does not have to be in a silo. It can take place across schools, districts, and globally. In addition, we are learning from the sports industry how video analysis can be used for both individual and team development. Video analysis has been adopted and sustained by every major sport, and we are learning how we can apply those lessons to education. While there are a number of innovative technology solutions, these solutions must be designed with teachers' input so the tools are not too complicated to use.

**JSD: Given the many roles you've played in education — from teacher to superintendent to state secretary of education to your role at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation — how has your view of professional learning changed or shifted?**

**Phillips:** To get dramatic changes in student outcomes, we're relying on teachers already in the profession to make significant improvements in their practice. I know from experience that's possible. When I became superintendent in Lancaster, Pa., a district in which about seven in 10 students lived in poverty, 80% of students were scoring in the bottom of state test results. The district was on the state's academic distress list. Success, at least initially, was preventing a state takeover. But it was nearly impossible to recruit new teachers. So I got to work developing the teachers I had. We gave teachers rigorous professional development, a narrowed and prioritized set of standards and common classroom assignments so that teachers could jointly examine and talk about student work. The results were incredible. One school went from less than 20% of their kids performing on standards to more than 80% at standard in both math and reading, without changing the principal or faculty. In less than three years, this district was off the state's distress list. It wasn't easy, but it also wasn't a miracle.

Teachers want to teach effectively and make a positive dif-

ference for their students, and they want to be part of a community in which their contributions are felt.

**JSD: What is professional learning like at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation?**

**Phillips:** We learn a tremendous amount from our partners in the field, although we still need to get better at synthesizing and sharing that learning both with the field and with each other. Like teachers, we never seem to have enough time. But our College Ready team meets every other month for two days to share what we're learning with each other and to bring in outside experts to deepen our knowledge. One reason the foundation is a rich place to learn is because our staff come from so many different backgrounds. They include education practitioners, academic researchers, journalists, and school leaders.

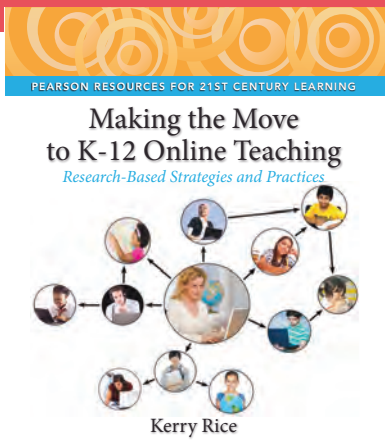
**JSD: It appears to me that the foundation is betting on the power of feedback. Feedback to many in education has a narrow definition. Would you offer your definition of this concept and why you think it is key to improving teacher effectiveness?**

**Phillips:** Feedback encompasses data from a wide variety of sources that teachers can use to adjust their instruction.

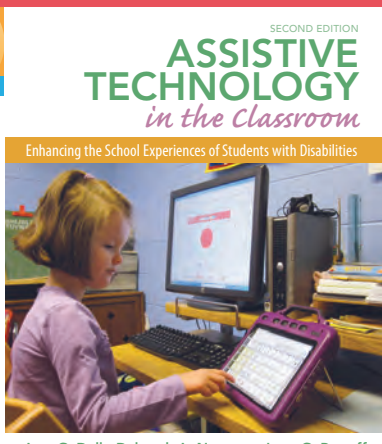
In the Measures of Effective Teaching project, for example, we're looking at multiple measures, including student growth on state tests, feedback from observations of teachers' classroom practice, student surveys, and assessments of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge. The literacy and math design collaboratives are focused on providing teachers with rich, formative assessments about how their students are doing relative to standards and how they can adjust instruction based on that evidence. Through our investments in next-generation models, we're also exploring how game-based learning, simulations, and other technology-enabled tools can provide a continuous cycle of information that allows teachers to diagnose where their students are, tailor their instruction accordingly, get real-time feedback as their students engage in the learning tasks, and then adjust instruction some more.

**JSD: There is now a sharp focus on teacher evaluation, but that is only one aspect of teacher effectiveness. How do we get education leaders to understand that professional learning is critical to teacher effectiveness, unrelated to teacher evaluation?**

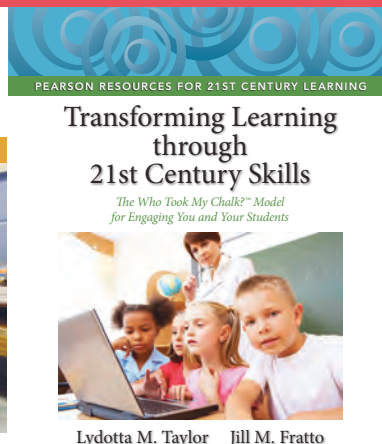
**Phillips:** I think we have to understand that the only way for students to improve is if their teachers are also learning and improving all the time, not just when they're being evaluated. In November, for example, we launched an online community for teachers using the literacy and math tools so they can share lesson plans, talk about what's working and what's not, and collaborate with their colleagues — not just in their own schools and districts, but nationally.



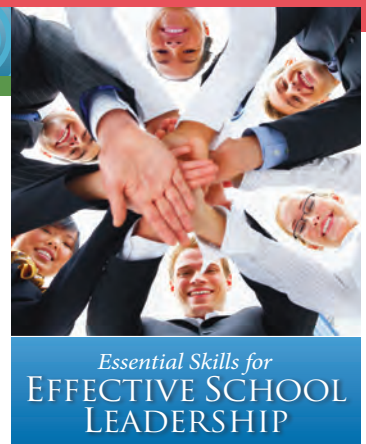
Foreword by Susan Patrick



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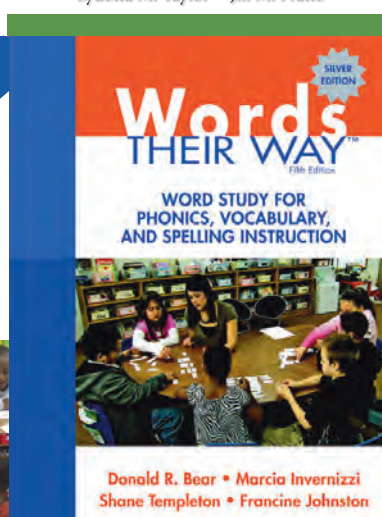
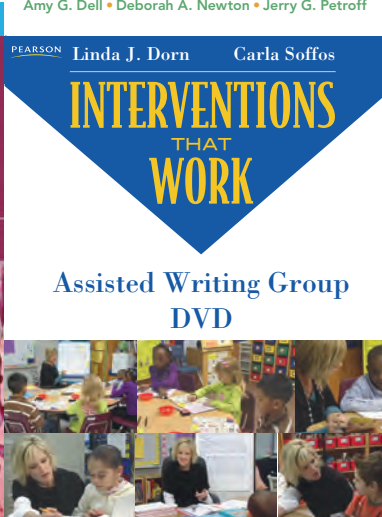
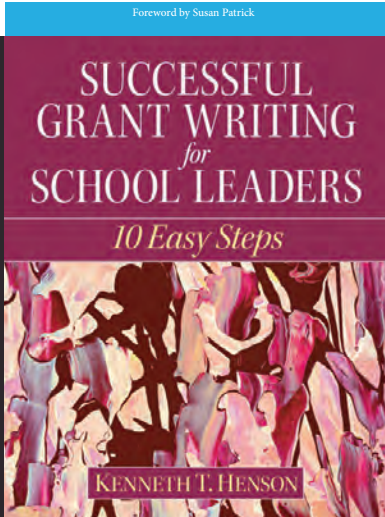
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**JSD: Last year’s Gates Foundation-sponsored survey in partnership with Scholastic (2010) pointed out how much teachers value collaboration in learning and solving problems. How do you see systems managing the dual priorities of individual teacher evaluation and expectations for learning communities?**

**Phillips:** These aren’t mutually exclusive. What we’ve seen in Hillsborough is that the results from individual teacher evaluations also highlighted areas where the district needed to shift its focus. For example, the district was spending a lot of professional development money on classroom management when its teachers needed more support in higher-order questioning skills. Similarly, you could see professional learning communities in schools tackling common areas of strength and weakness, sharing videos and examples of student work, and helping the whole team to get better.

**JSD: I know that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is now investing significantly in innovative professional development. Can you tell us about the theory of action behind this strategy?**

**Phillips:** We think technology has the ability to make teachers’ learning both more individualized — better tailored to individual teacher’s needs — and more collective.

Research shows that professional learning can have a powerful effect on teacher skills and knowledge and on student learning. To be effective, it must be sustained, data-informed, focused on important content, and embedded in the work of collaborative professional learning teams that support ongoing improvements in teachers’ practice and student achievement (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009).

We also know that teachers need to be actively involved in informing and designing their professional learning, and this is especially important for new innovative professional development tools. Many teachers indicate that much of the technology does not meet their needs or is hard to navigate.

Through the innovative professional development initiative, we intend to demonstrate that teachers can get better, faster, more effective technology-enabled support in a cost-effective manner, despite budget pressures. Ultimately, we expect our investments to result in student gains and increased efficiency in delivering supports to teachers.

In a recent teacher survey, 73% said their most recent evaluation did not identify any areas for development, and of those who did, only 45% said they received useful support to improve. Innovative professional development focuses on integrating the appropriate data and professional development resources to support teachers. For example, districts are building professional development portals that connect observation and assessment data to professional learning options geared to an individual teacher’s needs.

Innovative professional development also focuses on improving the mode of delivery within key areas: mentoring, coaching, simulations, and online collaboration. These tools need to exist within a greater ecosystem that offers teachers feedback on their practice and student achievement. In isolation, these offerings will not be much different than one-day workshops. We are investing in rapid prototyping to understand the potential of these models.

We plan to evaluate our investments by looking at implementation and outcomes related to teacher effectiveness and student learning. And we’ll stop investing in approaches that don’t work.

**JSD: In that burgeoning work, can you tell us if you are seeing any game-changers yet?**

**Phillips:** We’re seeing an array of promising practices. Here are just two examples:

The TeachME™ Lab (Teaching in a Mixed Reality Environment) at the University of Central Florida is to our knowledge the only lab in the country using a mixed-reality simulation environment to prepare or retrain teachers. The lab lets teachers learn skills and craft their practice without placing real students at risk during the learning process. Through game play, teachers perform situation-specific activities that model or replicate the real world of classrooms. There are currently 10 universities using TeachME as part of their teacher training and professional learning programs, and there is a wait list of more than 20 colleges that would like to sign up.

Tutor.com started as an online tutoring service for students, but now has a pilot to support teachers. It includes on-demand, one-on-one content and instructional practice that links what students are struggling with to supports for teachers through digitized textbooks and workbooks. It’s developed a repository of easily searchable learning modules and high-quality lesson plans by partnering with content providers so that master tutors have relevant content to share with teachers seeking help. And it tracks metrics based on usage, feedback, student outcomes, job satisfaction, performance evaluations, and retention.

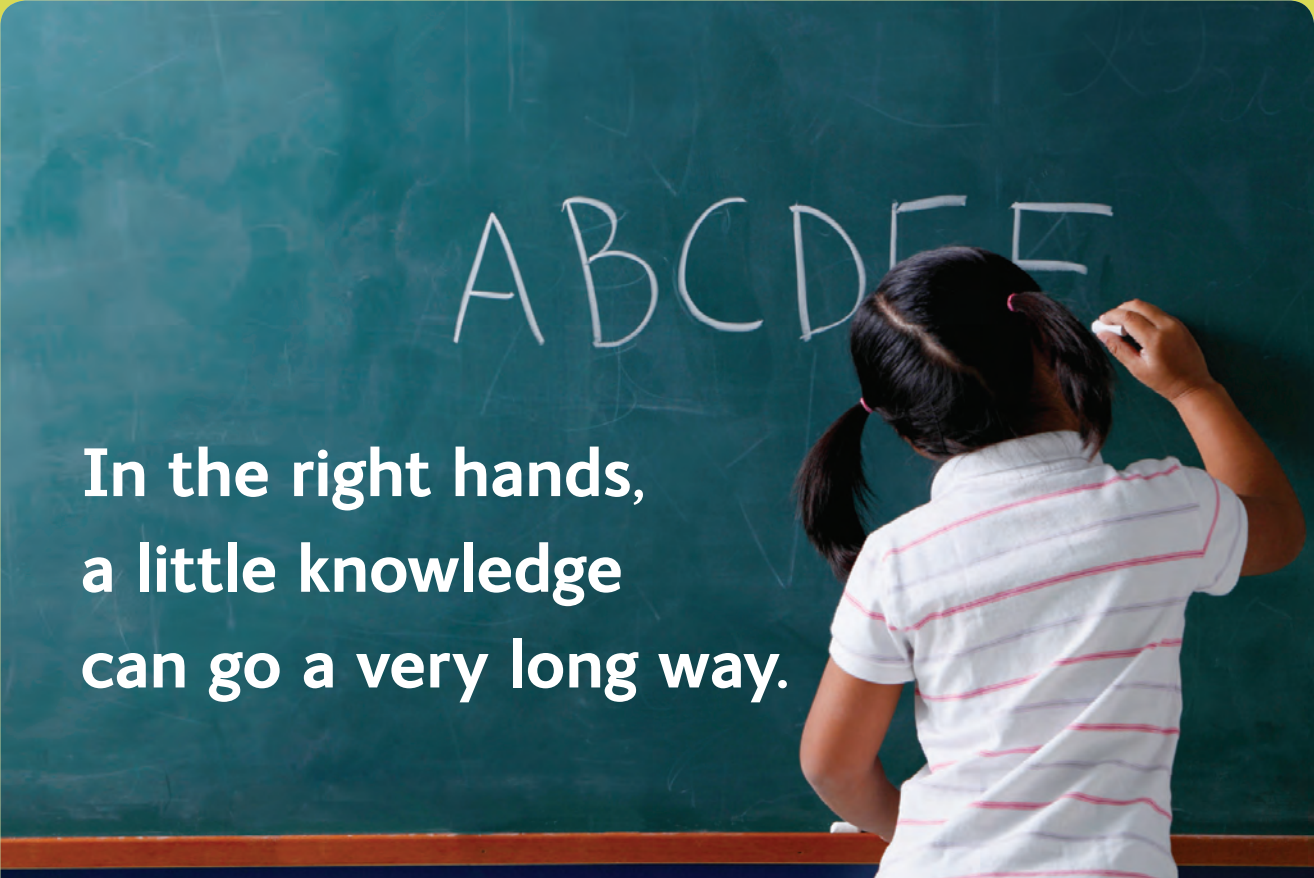
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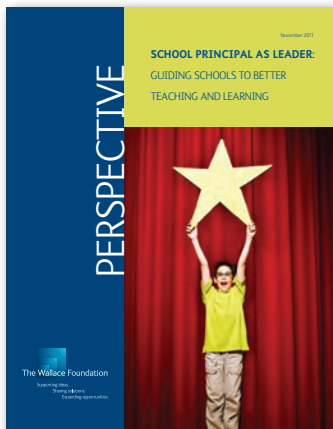
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# *The* VIEW *from the* SEATS

Student input provides a clearer picture of what works in schools

By Tracy Crow

**A**s school districts create systems to identify, monitor, and assess teacher effectiveness, they consider a variety of sources, including observations of teaching practices and analysis of student assessments. A new voice — student perceptions — has emerged as a valuable source of information. In many districts, leaders are collecting data from a range of stakeholders that includes students, parents, and educators to gather their perceptions of school culture, classroom conditions, and teaching effectiveness.

District leaders are excited about adding this dimension of data analysis to provide a clearer picture of what's working in schools. "Having these data will enable us to truly differentiate learning so we can support every single

My teacher in this class makes me feel that she really cares about me.

My teacher does not explain difficult things clearly.



teacher along the effectiveness spectrum," says Monica Jordan, coordinator of reflective practice in the department of teacher talent and effectiveness for Memphis (Tenn.) City Schools. While having stakeholder data was always important to the district, Jordan says that involvement in the Measures of Effective Teaching project, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, had expanded the district's interest in the use of this type of information. In 2011-12, every teacher in the district has access to this data as part of the evaluation system.

Memphis City Schools is working with the Tripod Project to develop this aspect of its evaluation system. Administered by Cambridge Education, the Tripod Project is a consortium of schools and districts with a shared interest in raising achievement for all students, while narrowing gaps among students from different racial, ethnic, and social class backgrounds. The project uses stakeholder surveys to generate reports to inform school improvement as well





as teacher evaluation systems through a partnership with Measures of Effective Teaching Project. Led by Ron Ferguson, senior lecturer in education and public policy and director of the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University, and Rob Ramsdell, vice president of Cambridge Education, the Tripod Project has administered and refined surveys over the last 10 years and provided reporting mechanisms and support for the use of the data. As this work has evolved, Ferguson and his research team have developed a framework that describes not only student engagement but also a set of classroom learning conditions that influence it. The classroom learning conditions in the framework have evolved to become what is called the Seven C's (see table on p. 26). The project has been a central component of the Measures of Effective Teaching Project.

A key concept underlying the Seven C's framework is the instructional tripod of content knowledge, pedagogical skill, and relationships, from which the organization takes

its name. This tripod emphasizes the range of factors at work in the classroom, and the Seven C's further delineate the classroom conditions, teacher actions, and implications for students.

Seeking student input isn't limited to the work of the Tripod Project. Many systems have collected climate data from students for years, and there are recent examples of large-scale data collection efforts to inform school improvement planning. New York City Schools, for example, uses stakeholder surveys to gain a fuller picture of student learning experiences. Educators, parents, and students respond to surveys with questions that address the kinds of learning dimensions that are also covered in the Seven C's framework. For example, students are asked if educators in their school treat students with respect, if they feel safe, and if teachers connect learning to life outside the classroom. Rhode Island schools administer stakeholder surveys to students along with parents and educators. Topics include

HOW STUDENTS RESPONDED		
<i>Percentage of secondary students agreeing with selected statements. Includes students in classes scoring at the 25th and 75th percentile. (From among 2,985 classrooms, each with at least five students reporting.)</i>		
7 C'S FRAMEWORK	25th percentile	75th percentile
<b>1. CARE:</b> My teacher in this class makes me feel that he or she really cares about me.	40	73
<b>2. CONTROL:</b> Our class stays busy and doesn't waste time.	36	69
<b>3. CLARIFY:</b> My teacher explains difficult things clearly.	50	79
<b>4. CHALLENGE:</b> My teacher wants me to explain my answers — why I think what I think.	59	83
<b>5. CAPTIVATE:</b> My teacher makes learning enjoyable.	33	72
<b>6. CONFER:</b> My teacher wants us to share our thoughts.	47	79
<b>7. CONSOLIDATE:</b> My teacher takes the time to summarize what we learn each day.	38	67

Source: *Measures of Effective Teaching Project*, 2010.

instructional methods, school safety and discipline, resource availability, and teacher expectations.

Data from the Tripod Project, however, are available at the classroom level. “The same students experience very different things in different classrooms,” Ramsdell says. Those different experiences are often the result of specific teacher actions. The data that come from these surveys illuminate in detail what teachers are doing — or not doing.

### WHY STUDENT ENGAGEMENT MATTERS

Based on his analysis of years of data, Ferguson says students are generally happier, more hard-working and more satisfied with their achievements in classrooms that rate higher on the Seven C’s. “We started the Tripod framework with a focus on student engagement and then added an emphasis on instruction. The Gates project has focused on our Seven C’s measures of instruction,” Ferguson says. “We had added a focus on the

quality of instruction because we wanted to see what produced student engagement.”

Ferguson posits that when teachers teach effectively, student learning improves for two reasons. First, if teachers are explaining concepts more clearly, students will better understand the content and do better on tests. Second, if teachers are teaching more effectively on all seven dimensions of the framework, students are going to be more engaged in what’s happening in the classroom. “Through the engagement, they’re going to do the work that leads to more learning,” he says.

With a focus on engagement, “we’re making the point that we care,” Ferguson says. That caring goes beyond test scores. While some teaching strategies may improve test performance, they may not contribute to longer-term learning. “Most of us as parents would sacrifice a few points on a test in exchange for more happiness,” he says. “We want to build a love of learning, not just maximize the score of the next test coming up.”

Test scores do improve, however. Information collected as part of the Measures of Effective Teaching research shows alignment between classes scoring at high percentiles and teachers receiving high ratings on selected statements tied to the Seven C’s framework from the students in those classes (see table at left.) For example, 50% of students in 25th-percentile classes agree with the statement, “My teacher explains difficult things clearly,” while 79% of students in 75th-percentile classes agree (Measures of Effective Teaching Project, 2010).

Jordan explains the value she sees in the framework, both for understanding what boosts student achievement and how teachers can improve their practices. When she sees the bulk of students responding that they experience particularly high levels of the challenge and control elements, for example, she knows from other data that those students are also high-achieving. With these elements, she says, “the teacher has control over the class and presses the student to keep trying.” Given the correlation between high achievement and control and challenge, Jordan says it makes sense to offer professional learning that makes explicit to teachers the moves that prompt students to perceive that classrooms are challenging and under control. “Those moves can’t be invisible to the teacher. They have to be very obvious,” she says.

The problem is that such professional learning can’t be one-size-fits-all. Since the district can’t provide one-to-one coaching for every teacher, it will turn to other solutions, including bud-in-ear coaching that allows remote observers to remind teachers precisely what teacher moves create the most impact for students.

### LEARNING FROM THE DATA

Using such data for professional learning at the individual level has not yet been systematic or widespread, according to Ramsdell. “We have lots of schools and districts that have used our services over the years. I’d characterize them as early adopt-

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ers, usually spearheaded by a champion in the district who has a real passion for including student voice in school improvement efforts.” Only recently have districts begun to include this data in professional learning planning and teacher evaluation systems.

As the Tripod Project becomes a part of teacher evaluation and accountability systems, educators’ perceptions are bound to change. “It’s getting a very different kind of attention,” Ramsdell says. “Because of results from the Measures of Effective Teaching initiative, there’s a different kind of credibility assigned to the surveys. They are being used much more systematically and seriously than in the past.”

Teachers have told Ramsdell that this data coming directly from students is enticing in some ways. Teachers realize that they have immediate control over the actions that contribute to students’ perceptions and experiences, whereas they may not feel that same level of control related to other measures of their effectiveness. Ferguson has seen similar reactions and says he hopes that teachers’ response to the data opens the door for more professional learning. “At least some folks on our research team think that having teachers see their results is going to give them a greater incentive to tune into professional development supports, and I think that’s

probably right,” he says. He wants to make sure that teachers get the message that these are all dimensions on which they can improve.

“Just like we want teachers to address students with an ‘I’m going to support you, I believe in you, I’m not going to let you fail’ approach, we need to address teachers with that same attitude,” Ferguson says. “Everybody in the building is a learner. None of us is fully realized in terms of our potential and we’re going to work together to help each of us to reach our potential.”

Ferguson’s hope is that schools and districts can use this data as an improvement tool, and that school and district leaders find ways to make clear to educators that the purpose of such tools is not punitive. Ideally, districts would say, “We’re not going to judge you or judge what your potential might be based on any measure that we’ve taken today. We will use the measure we took today in order to get a better understanding of what we need to work on,” Ferguson says.

### ALIGNING PRACTICES WITH PERCEPTIONS

Students aren’t the only ones to offer their perceptions through these surveys. The Tripod Project also surveys teachers, and matching what teachers say about their practices and their students with what their students say is revealing. Some of the teachers’ answers demonstrate how comfortable they are teaching the lower-performing students in their classes. For example,

questions address whether teachers call on high achievers more than they call on low achievers, or whether they think it slows down a class too much to encourage low achievers to ask questions.

“They can answer those on a scale of 1-5, and they don’t tend to answer in the extremes,” Ferguson says. The difference among teacher responses “tells you something about their sensibilities and their attitudes about the kids,” he says.

What Ferguson calls the “give-up index” is a scale that signals to Ferguson and his researchers that a teacher is giving up on the low achiever in class. “When you look at how a teacher’s rating on the give-up index correlates with how the students have rated the teacher, there’s a clear relationship,” he says. “When you put all this together, you get an image of a social environment where the feedback effects operate in both directions. What the teacher is doing affects how the student is responding and how the student is responding is affecting what the teacher is doing.” While he believes that what teachers are saying about their students’ behaviors is fairly accurate, the teachers probably don’t realize that their own practices are causing at least some of the student behaviors that they are observing.

To help build teachers’ capacity to reach and engage students, the team at Tripod is working with Robert Pianta, dean of the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia, to share a library of videos of teaching practices. Professional learning will be organized around educators viewing and discussing teaching examples. Observing one another in classrooms is another strategy for examining practice.

Another useful learning strategy is a discussion protocol Ferguson and his team use called “Teaching the hard stuff” to engage educators in exploring specific aspects of their instructional practices. Teachers work together over the course of a school year, bringing assignments on which students struggled, accompanied by both strong and weak examples of related student work. Together the group examines the student work. Their conversations are organized around two headings — feasibility and focus. As they discuss feasibility, teachers consider if success was feasible for the students who didn’t do well. For example, was the vocabulary confusing, or were there concepts that the teacher didn’t make clear? As they consider focus, they talk about whether students were paying attention, wondering whether the teacher made the content sufficiently interesting or tied it to the world outside the classroom.

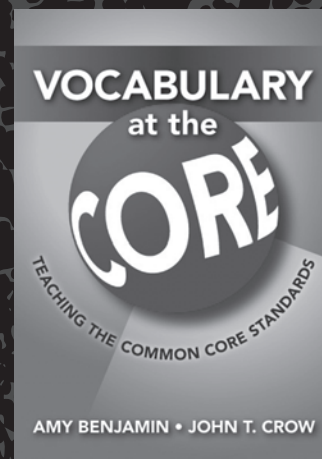
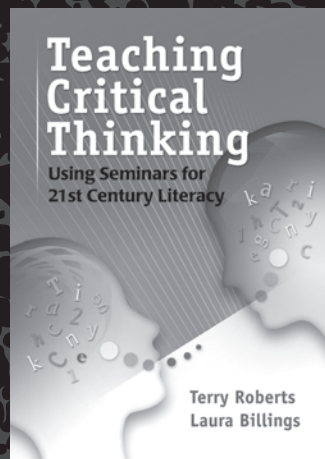
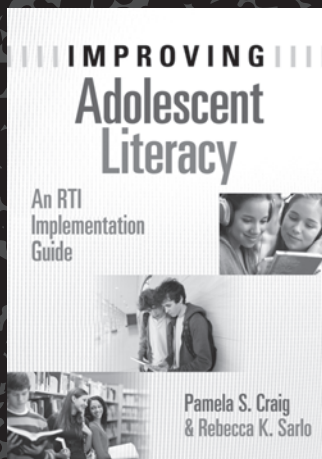
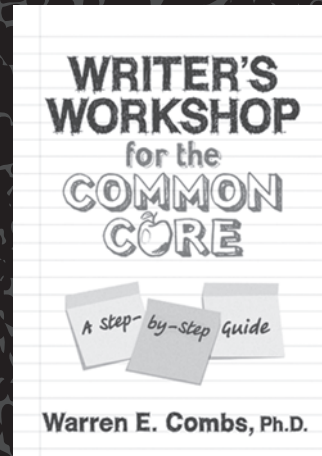
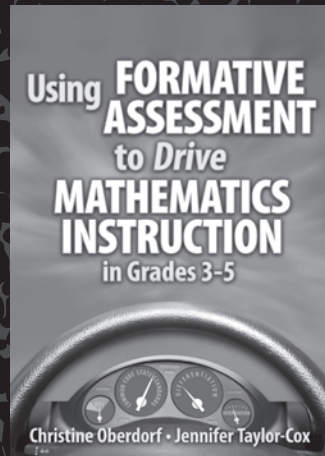
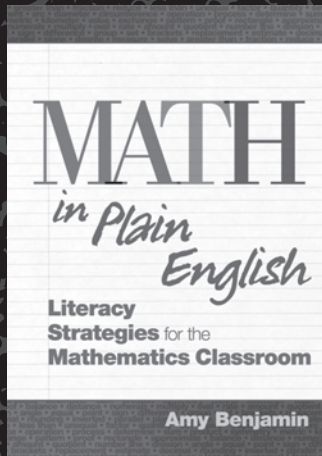
Such discussions are always valuable learning experiences, Ferguson says. “When I sit with teachers who go through this exercise, they virtually always get up from the table with a different understanding of their students and their students’ work,” he says. They walk away with clear ideas about what they need to do next.

However, even when schools know the value of teachers spending time together this way, they don’t always make it happen, just as they don’t create enough opportunities for teachers

**The Tripod Project also surveys teachers, and matching what teachers say about their practices and their students with what their students say is revealing.**



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to observe one another in classrooms. “People have been talking about that for at least the last 10 to 15 years,” Ferguson says, yet such peer-to-peer observations are not as commonplace as they should be. *The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Collaborating for Student Success* reports that of all collaborative activities, teachers observing one another and providing feedback is the least common (MetLife, 2010, p. 18).

### PRESSURE FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

In spite of the acknowledged value of such collaborative learning practices, they haven’t been happening as often as they should, but Ferguson thinks that will change as the pressure to strengthen teaching mounts. He believes that the accountability environment surrounding teaching will encourage more teachers to engage in this kind of learning.

In 2005, Ferguson asked teachers to respond to a survey about the last professional development they had experienced that had little or no impact on teaching or learning (Ferguson, 2006). Among the reasons checked most often was that teachers were not held accountable for doing it. These were environments where teachers knew almost with certainty that they wouldn’t be monitored, according to Ferguson. That lack of implementation is “just not going to work anymore,” he says. Effective application — of the Seven C’s or any new initiative — is going to require some kind of monitoring. Instructional leadership will get us there, Ferguson says.

His research into exemplary high schools (Ferguson, Hackman, Hanna, & Ballantine, 2010) highlights the importance of leadership in moving schools through successful change. “I suspect there are a lot of people in leadership positions who have never seen a truly exemplary school, and they doubt that it could happen,” Ferguson says. He believes that schools that make positive improvements sometimes do it before the people involved believe it can happen. “They did it because some people at the top said, ‘Look, we’re doing this,’ and then people were surprised when they got great results,” he says. Such educators learned to get great results over time and then expectations arose as a consequence of success.

Ultimately, the success didn’t come because these educators believed in their students, Ferguson says. Rather, they believed in their kids because they succeeded, and they succeeded because of the social and political conditions in the school that pushed them to do things they weren’t doing before.

While some educators have been resistant to have the tough conversations that can lead to change, others are excited to embrace this new source of information. Ferguson remembers a particularly influential teacher last year who asked to see his classroom-level reports. Previously, the school shared building-level reports that showed trends and patterns without identifying specific teachers. When the teacher realized how valuable the information was, he insisted that every teacher needed to see their results whether they wanted to or not. He realized that “it

made absolutely no sense for teachers not to get their results,” Ferguson says. Teachers responded with enthusiasm, telling the assistant principal this was the most valuable feedback they had ever received due to its immediacy and authenticity.

One challenge is to make sure that school leaders prepare teachers to look at their results and consider their impact appropriately. Ramsdell stresses that this is just one source of data among many. Jordan agrees. In Memphis, district leaders are helping teachers understand the big picture that any feedback is valuable, and the context for these data is important. Ferguson’s work is “what gives us permission to ask students for their perceptions,” she says, so it is important to give teachers experiences that help them understand why these data are valid. They are taking these steps slowly. When Memphis schools started the Measures of Effective Teaching project, the district inundated teachers with the research behind it, and it was a “fire-hydrant experience,” Jordan says. As all teachers are exposed to student perception data, district leaders are introducing the information about Seven C’s more slowly, with the intention that as teachers spend more time on the data, the learning about what it means will become more complex to support their evolving understanding.

The Tripod Project’s origins tie the use of this data to professional learning and school improvement purposes, and Ramsdell and Ferguson are eager to see that emphasis continue. “I would like to see places using these kinds of tools for two, three, four years focused mainly on professional learning and only eventually start to use it to make judgments that have consequences for people’s careers,” Ferguson says. “If people use and honor this information, it gives them a number of ideas on dimensions along which they can get better.”

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# MEASUREMENT MAKEOVER

**Florida district revamps  
teacher evaluation  
to focus on student  
achievement**

**By Valerie von Frank**

**H**illsborough County (Fla.) Public Schools had a concern. A review in 2008 of teacher evaluations in the district found that more than 99% of the 12,000 teachers were rated satisfactory or outstanding, and nearly half of high school teachers received perfect scores.

While Hillsborough is a high-performing district and has several high schools on *Newsweek's* 2010 list of the nation's best, many in the district agreed the evaluations must be misleading — but there was no way to know

exactly how the ratings matched up to student learning. And teachers and administrators alike didn't know exactly how to describe what the evaluations were supposed to do: What does exceptional teaching look like?

Teachers were laboring under an unequal system of evaluation from school to school. Principals were asked to observe nontenured teachers once a year and tick off boxes on a 44-item checklist. Tenured teachers were observed once every three years.

"Truthfully," said David Steele, Hillsborough's chief information and technology officer, "many of our principals were not even reaching that goal. We were not in classrooms observing frequently enough."

The evaluations seemed to have little real connection

to teachers' daily work. Teachers also were frustrated that the effort yielded few specifics about what they could do to improve. So, in a system dedicated to continuous improvement, the administration and union jointly began to work to answer the critical questions to define teaching practices that lead to student learning.

Hillsborough is not alone. The question of what constitutes effective teaching is at the core of efforts around the nation to raise student achievement by focusing on teacher quality. In 2010 and 2011 legislative sessions, states including Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, and Tennessee passed legislation to mandate new systems of teacher evaluation based at least partly on student achievement, to lower barriers to dismissing underperforming teachers, and to change state policies that base layoffs on seniority.

They may have been goaded to some extent by a 2009 study of 12 districts over four states that concluded, "A teacher's effectiveness — the most important factor for schools in improving student achievement — is not measured, recorded, or used to inform decision-making in any meaningful way" (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009, p. 1). The report goes on to state, "In general, our schools are indifferent to instructional effectiveness — except when it comes time to remove a teacher" (p. 2).

Many also saw as an incentive grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that put funding behind change efforts. Hillsborough has been involved in two grant projects, yielding \$100 million over seven years, about 1% of the large district's annual operating budget, according to Steele.

"The Gates grant gives us money to do things we couldn't afford to do in the past," Steele said.

## MEASURES OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Hillsborough began its work as part of the Gates Foundation's Measures of Effective Teaching Project, a \$45-million effort with 3,000 teachers in seven districts over two years to develop objective and reliable measures of effective teaching. Researchers collected data from student feedback through surveys, student work, supplemental student assessments, assessments of teachers' ability to recognize and diagnose student problems, and teacher surveys on working conditions. In addition, a pivotal element of the research is more than 13,000 videotaped classroom lessons captured by 360-degree cameras, and teachers' subsequent reflections on their videotaped lessons.

Initial findings from that project across the districts indicated that "in every grade and subject, a teacher's past track record of value-added is among the strongest predictors of their students' achievement gains in other classes and academic years" (Measures of Effective Teaching Project, 2010, p. 9).

"The teachers who lead students to achievement gains in one year or in one class tend to do so in other years and other classes," a Measures of Effective Teaching Project report states. More conclusions based on two years of data from the project are expected to be released in January 2012.

Other recent studies underscore the complementary nature of student learning data and teacher observations in evaluations. A report of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2011) states, "There will always be challenges in determining how much each teacher contributes to student learning. Education is a complex process ... For this reason, thoughtful evaluations of teacher performance must combine direct evidence of student learning such as 'value-added' data and examinations of teaching practice." A study analyzing student data from New York City between 2003 and 2008 found a correlation between teachers who did well on value-added measures and those who scored highly in observations, concluding that observations pick up on teacher skills not captured in student test scores — and that evaluation systems should incorporate both subjective measures by trained professionals and objective data (Rockoff & Speroni, 2011).

"It's studies like this that, as we learn more about effective teaching, will help us pinpoint the most effective skills," Steele said. Steele, who also is project manager for the district's teacher effectiveness initiative, said educators already know quite a bit about the essential elements of good teaching.

"What we're searching for right now are ways to measure teacher effectiveness, but right now, we're saying effective teaching is the person who scores the highest on the measures we have," Steele said. "One of the keys is having multiple measures. There is no one way to measure teacher effectiveness. It is a combination of different skills."

## A NEW DEFINITION OF EFFECTIVENESS

Hillsborough began extensive work in spring 2009 to consider ways to improve teaching quality, continuing the Measures of Effective Teaching Project objectives as one of a half-dozen districts in the nation continuing work with

### Hillsborough County Public Schools

Tampa, Fla.

Number of schools: **225**

Enrollment: **192,000**

Staff: **12,000**

Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	<b>40.1%</b>
Black:	<b>21.5%</b>
Hispanic:	<b>29.6%</b>
Asian/Pacific Islander:	<b>3.4%</b>
Native American:	<b>.3%</b>
Other:	<b>5.1%</b>

Free/reduced lunch: **57%**

Contact: **David Steele**, chief information and technology officer

Email: **David.Steele@sdhc.k12.fl.us**



the Gates Foundation in an intensive partnership project. The goal, Steele said, is to understand clearly which skills correlate to higher student performance and to work with teachers to develop those skills.

The district formed a teacher evaluation committee. Members spent summer 2009 researching evaluations and settled on adapting Charlotte Danielson’s framework for effective teaching as a foundation for observations. Steele noted that while some simply use the framework Danielson published, Hillsborough worked with Danielson to modify it where appropriate for the district’s context. Hiring Danielson as a consultant allowed changes to be made to the observation form through conversation and feedback, with Danielson able to explain to committee members the rationale behind the points included and how each worked with others.

“We wanted something first and foremost that was rubric-based, so a teacher would have a clear understanding of what he or she needed to do when being observed,” Steele said. “That clarity was something we were looking for.”

By spring 2010, a teacher evaluation committee had drafted a new teacher evaluation system with multiple measures. To measure classroom practice, two different observers, both a trained peer or mentor and supervising administrator, use the Danielson-based framework over multiple observations.

The observation form no longer includes 44 items to check,

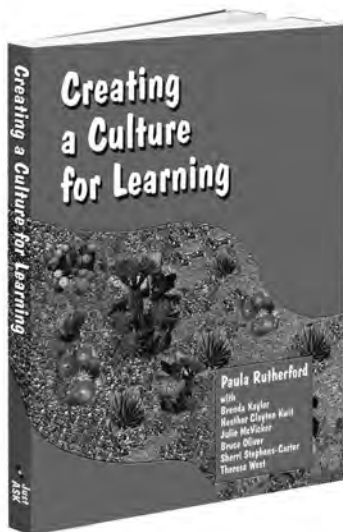
but concentrates on five or six subcategories each in four main areas. Each of the domains within the observation is weighted: planning and preparation, 20%; classroom environment, 20%; instruction, 40%; and professional responsibilities, 20%.

“We want to get a better understanding of exactly which skills correlate most closely to higher student performance,” Steele said. “We wrestled with that as a committee — how to weight the categories. Over time, we could very well adjust based on what we learn about the value of the components.”

With the earlier observation form, according to Steele, teachers had no real direction for what to do to improve in a specific area for which the observer might have checked off a lower rating. With the new model, the classroom observation sheet is exactly the same as the teacher’s end-of-year evaluation, so each time a teacher is observed, he or she knows which areas the observer thought needed to be developed and which looked good.

“It’s a much more informative process and leads to a clear understanding on the teacher’s part of the strategies he or she needs to use to teach more effectively,” Steele said.

The other prong of the evaluation system is student learning data. Working with the University of Wisconsin’s Value-Added Research Center, the district developed a method for a value-added assessment of teaching. Teacher evaluations now have student learning growth accounting for 40% of the evaluation.



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Peer and mentor observations account for 30% of the evaluation, the administrators' observation for 30%.

"We wanted the value-added (student learning data) to be the biggest single piece" of the evaluation, Steele said, "but we didn't want any one piece to outweigh the other two."

#### PEER AND MENTOR OBSERVATIONS

The peer and mentor observations are a key component of the evaluations, Steele said, and the most powerful professional learning for teachers and the observers. The district and union had approved a peer assistance program in the 1990s with no

evaluative component, but budget constraints sank it before it began.

In 2010-11, the district hired nearly 200 experienced educators for full-time roles as mentors and peer evaluators at a cost of about \$12 million, or less than 1% of the district's annual operating budget. Six times as many applied for the positions and were selected by a committee of principals, teachers, members of the union, and district administrators.

Mentors focus their work on supporting new teachers, while peer observers work with veteran teachers. Each earns an additional \$5,000 stipend and returns to the classroom after two

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or three years. For peer teachers to understand firsthand what daily practice is like, Steele said, they must recently have been in the classroom. Hiring new observers every few years ensures that currency, he said.

“We hope and expect they will be more effective teachers by having had the experience of helping others,” Steele said. “We also see that as a benefit. We make them cycle back because a peer adds an immediacy of teaching that a principal won’t have.”

Peers and mentors conduct formal observations. Mentors work regularly with about 20 new teachers, visiting first-year teachers once a week and second-year teachers every two weeks. For first- and second-year teacher observations, two mentors switch the teachers with whom they work so the mentoring relationship remains pure and the mentor is not seen in an evaluative role.

Peer observers at first had a caseload of about 150 teachers to observe regularly, which the district reduced to 110 teachers in the second year, recognizing that the number was too high.

Each evaluator is trained to conduct three parts of a cycle that helps teachers gain information and reflect on their practices: preobservation conference, observation, and post-observation conference. That reflective piece is essential for powerful learning, Steele said.

Before the preobservation conference, teachers complete a set of questions that they review with the peers and mentors, who use a preconference guide document to help stimulate thinking. Peer observers and mentors might ask:

- What is/are your lesson objective(s)?
- How is the lesson objective aligned with state curriculum standards?
- What data did you use to design this lesson? How did the data influence the planning of this lesson?
- How will you know if your lesson objective was achieved?

After the observation, the evaluators load their ratings into a data management system accessible by the teacher, principal, and evaluators. Teachers then can decide on follow-up.

## LESSONS LEARNED

In a report for the Gates Foundation, the district listed six lessons learned:

- Build a foundation of board/district/union shared leadership;
- Create a sense of urgency rooted in student learning;
- Establish a high-capacity executive team of respected district leaders;
- Include teachers and principals in every phase;
- Communicate clearly and constantly through multiple channels; and
- Incorporate what is learned from implementation quickly.

**Source:** Hillsborough County Public Schools.

## CONDITIONS FOR OBSERVATION

The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality recommends that certain conditions be in place before classroom observations are used in evaluations (Goe & Croft, 2009):

- Use a high-quality observation instrument based on standards of effective teaching practice that include levels of performance.
- Allow teachers time and opportunity to familiarize themselves with the observation instrument so that they will understand what is expected.
- Train observers to use the instrument so that all observers are using it in the same way. The goal is to ensure that a teacher gets the same score no matter which rater conducts the observation. Furthermore, avoid potential rater bias (or the appearance of bias) by using trained raters.
- Calibrate observers. Calibration involves checking the scores of observers to ensure that they are not getting more stringent or lax in scoring over time, a condition called “rater drift.”
- When the stakes are high, conduct multiple observations, preferably with different observers.
- For elementary teachers and other teachers of more than one subject, observing when they are teaching different subjects will help identify subject-specific strengths and weaknesses.
- Share rating with the teachers, preferably as part of an individual development plan.

Depending on the teacher’s needs, the peers may offer a conference, model a lesson, or provide additional informal observations that focus on classroom skills.

## PRINCIPAL OBSERVATIONS

The principal’s role changed dramatically under the new system, Steele said. “We do believe very strongly that we want the principal to be the instructional leader of the school,” he said. “And if you’re going to have a high-stakes (teacher) evaluation, it’s a good idea if the principal has actually watched the teacher teach a lesson.”

Principals are required to conduct at least one formal observation of each teacher. Steele admitted finding the time is an issue for principals, and for that reason, the district allows assistant principals to conduct required additional administrative observations.

The change, Steele said, has led to principals having daily conversations with teachers about their planning, instructional strategies, and effective lessons, making them true instructional leaders.



The change also led the district to develop a new principal evaluation system based on 10 competencies derived from the state's educational leadership standards. Principals also are evaluated on student learning gains, area director assessment, school operation information, teacher retention, student attendance/discipline, and teacher evaluation accuracy compared with peer evaluators and teachers' value-added scores. The principal evaluation also incorporates teacher feedback.

#### STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT DATA

Steele said grant money was particularly helpful for the district to purchase software and hardware to collect evaluation data and student achievement data, and to hire help to determine value-added measures. Value-added models are "a collection of complex statistical techniques that use multiple years of students' test score data to estimate the effects of individual schools or teachers" (McCaffrey, Lockwood, Koretz, & Hamilton, 2003, p. xi).

The district uses value-added measures researched by the University of Wisconsin's Value-Added Research Center. The district collects student assessment data, links the data to individual students with information about their backgrounds, links

to individual courses and teachers using unique identification numbers, and transmits the data for analysis to the university.

The university then uses the data to compute a value-added measure for each teacher indicating the growth of that teacher's students compared with that of an average district teacher for that subject.

"We truly want to find that best statistical measure of student growth and how it reflects on the teacher," Steele said. However, he continued, "Even within the value-added model, we are trying to get as many measures as possible. Our goal is that no teacher should have just one post-test that is used as a measure."

As data are collected, evaluations will be based on the three most recent years of information.

Because the district had been using student achievement data to pay teachers bonuses from 2002 on and had even earlier begun creating and validating hundreds of pre- and post-test instruments, it was ahead of many districts in which some teachers teach subjects or grades for which there is no exam.

#### LAUNCHING CHANGE

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gets publicized in that way, but any of us would say the professional development is the centerpiece; it's just evaluation that gets all the attention," Steele said.

The change to the new evaluation system began with extensive professional development in summer 2010 for principals, assistant principals, and peer and mentor evaluators. All needed to learn about the observation forms and become trained evaluators to use them.

The district worked with a consulting organization to make sure all those who would conduct observations measured each component the same way. After 40 to 50 hours of learning, nearly 700 observers were certified to use the process starting in 2010-11. After a year, their reliability was tested again to recalibrate, if necessary, and ensure that what one observer measured in one school with one teacher would be based on the same criteria as another observer in a different school with a different teacher.

The evaluators conduct formal, full-period observations. In

the first year of the new system, the most excellent teachers were observed three times and the most struggling were observed 11 times. For 2011-12, the district added informal unannounced observations, decreasing full-period formal visits and supplementing them with pop-in informal observations lasting 10 to 15 minutes.

The professional conversations that result from the observations are the most powerful form of professional learning teachers can experience, Steele said. The district also has made reference tables for teachers, Steele said, so if a teacher sees from an observation that he or she needs to strengthen a particular area, the teacher can look at the table for courses that will build that skill.

In addition, Steele said, the district's director of professional development has worked with each district trainer to deconstruct professional development course outlines and align each course to the new evaluation. Some courses may be eliminated, he said. The University of Wisconsin also helped the district identify some of its professional development courses that would benefit from improved pre- and post-tests, and the district's teachers worked to strengthen them.

"We want to make sure that our professional development is aligned with what we evaluate," Steele said. "We want to make sure our trainers are all on the same page when they are talking with teachers about effective pedagogical strategies."

The district has consistently dedicated \$12 million to \$15 million a year out of the operating budget to formal professional learning, Steele said. He said the district used the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act money it received for added professional learning both for trainers and courses and to offer teachers stipends for evening and summer work.

Another change in the system was to the final result of the observations and value-added data. Overall teacher ratings were changed from unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, and distinguished to: requires action, developing, accomplished, and exemplary. By specifying "requires action," the emphasis is on helping teachers improve their practice, Steele said.

In 2013-14, the district plans to have collected three years of data and to begin linking teacher evaluations to compensation and teacher promotions. Teachers who receive an unsatisfactory rating in two consecutive years face a dismissal process. Of the 250 lowest-evaluated teachers in 2010-11, 72 did not return to teach in 2011-12, Steele said. He said principals counsel those who are underperforming, and some leave.

In the first year of the new evaluation, only three teachers had two consecutive unsatisfactory ratings. Now, 100 have been identified with unsatisfactory performance and could receive a consecutive poor rating. However, Steele said, "It's not our goal to lose them; it's our goal to improve them."

"We think that too many districts caught up in the current evaluation craze around the country have the idea you're going to measure your success by how many ineffective teachers you

<b>ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF VALUE-ADDED MEASURES</b>		
A comparison of value-added measures and classroom observation for teacher evaluation.		
	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
<b>Value-added measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively inexpensive (after initial infrastructure costs).</li> <li>• Focuses solely and directly on student learning.</li> <li>• Relatively objective.</li> <li>• Comparable across schools, districts, and even states (if they are using the same statistical methods and achievement tests).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costly to build necessary data system; generally requires hiring experts to set it up and conduct the analyses.</li> <li>• No information about what effective teachers do in the classroom.</li> <li>• No information to help "bad" teachers improve.</li> <li>• No information for some teachers (e.g. special education, art, music, early elementary).</li> </ul>
<b>Classroom observation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High face-validity and teacher buy-in.</li> <li>• Allows teachers to understand and participate in the evaluation process.</li> <li>• Useful for formative evaluation, particularly for novice teachers.</li> <li>• Based on "best practices."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher personnel costs.</li> <li>• May not take student achievement into account.</li> <li>• Scores determined by evaluators with different levels of training.</li> <li>• May be affected by whether measures are used for high-stakes or low-stakes evaluation.</li> </ul>

Source: Goe & Croft, 2009.

fire. Our approach is to measure our effectiveness by how many ineffective teachers we improve. You spend too much money recruiting and growing a teacher to discard them without trying professional development to give them a chance to improve.”

As the district looks toward continuing to refine teaching practices that lead to student learning, the new system is making a difference. Steele said the principals advisory group has consistently reported over the past 15 months that “teachers have really raised their game. They understand what the expectations are, and they are teaching at a higher level than they’ve ever taught before.”

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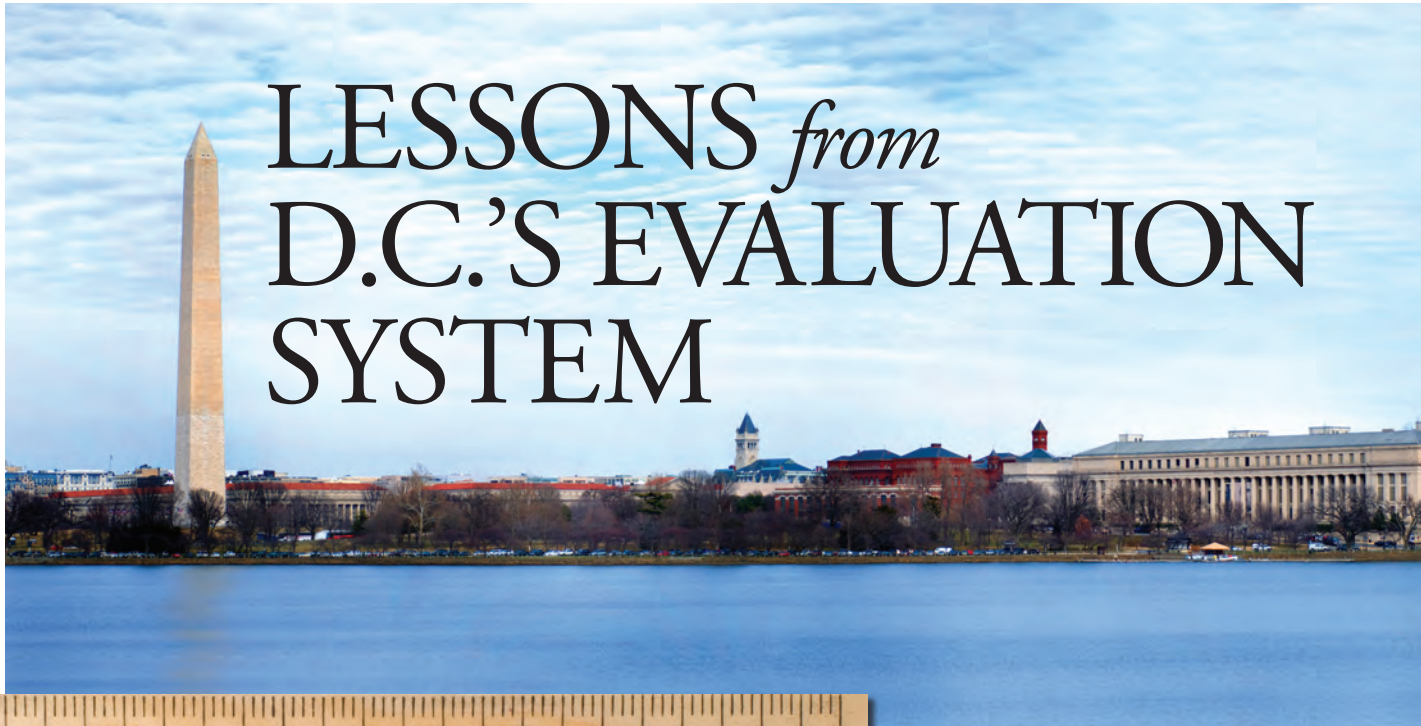
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# LESSONS *from* D.C.'S EVALUATION SYSTEM



**TEACHERS GIVE IMPACT LOW MARKS  
ON SUPPORT AND PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

**By Susan Headden and Elena Silva**

**A**s a nation, we are changing the way we evaluate teachers, moving from a patchwork of weak and haphazard approaches to whole data-driven systems with dramatically high stakes. From Memphis to Chicago to Baltimore, districts and states are working to develop these systems, acknowledging the crucial role played by teachers and pushed toward greater accountability by competitive federal grant programs. At least 40 states have applied to the U.S. Department of Education for waivers that, in exchange for more flexibility on No Child Left Behind provisions, require comprehensive teacher evaluation systems (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

As they embark on this challenging task, districts can take some lessons from the successes and shortcomings

of an evaluation system that is often held up as a model: the IMPACT system in Washington, D.C. The controversial legacy of former schools chancellor Michelle Rhee, IMPACT sets clear expectations for instruction and holds teachers to well-defined standards of performance. Now into its third year, the program appears to be meeting its goals of rewarding effective teachers and eliminating educators it considers incompetent. And it has given the public reason to have more faith in its school system. But IMPACT, which ranks teachers on several measures, has earned plenty of criticism from teachers who say it is rigid and punitive and forces them to teach in an overly prescriptive way. More important, teachers say that in its rush to strengthen accountability, IMPACT misses what they say they need most — greater support and more meaningful professional development.

Like most public school systems, the District of Columbia Public Schools was badly in need of a new way to



ensure that it was putting a good teacher in every classroom. In 2007, when then-mayor Adrian Fenty took control of the city schools, the district's scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress were among the lowest in the nation, and its black-white achievement gap was the largest of 11 urban districts that reported their results (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). And yet the district's evaluation system, which called for observations just once a year and graded teachers on a short checklist, rated 95% of teachers satisfactory or above.

### A NEW SYSTEM

The architects of the new system started with the basics: defining good teaching. The Teaching and Learning Framework, as the resulting document is called, was a way for principals, teachers, and administrators to work together to improve instruction. Instead of focusing on what to teach, they concentrated on how to teach, with specific directions that spanned subject areas. (See "Elements of good teaching" in box at right.) "We focused first on pedagogy, whereas most other reforms focused on curriculum," said Scott Thompson, director of teacher effectiveness strategy for DCPS. "You could have the greatest curriculum in the world, but if the teachers are ineffective in conveying it, then it's not going to matter."

Defining good teaching is one thing. Implementing an

### ELEMENTS OF GOOD TEACHING

The nine elements of the Teaching and Learning Framework form the essential rubric on which classroom performance is judged through IMPACT. They are:

1. Lead well-organized, objective-driven lessons.
2. Explain content clearly.
3. Engage students at all learning levels in rigorous work.
4. Provide students with multiple ways to engage with content.
5. Check for student understanding.
6. Respond to student misunderstandings.
7. Develop higher-level understanding through effective questioning.
8. Maximize instructional time.
9. Build a supportive, learning-focused classroom community.

Learn more about the development of the framework and lessons learned through that process in *District of Columbia Public Schools: Defining Instructional Expectations and Aligning Accountability and Support* (Curtis, 2011).

evaluation system around it, as D.C. and other school systems have found, is a far more complicated task. With input from teachers, administrators, and policy experts, D.C. produced a system that rates teachers on a combination of factors, some weighted more heavily than others. Classroom performance, as judged by the teaching and learning rubric, counts for 3%; student test scores (value-added data) for teachers in grades that take standardized tests count for 50%; commitment to the school community gets 10%;

and school value-added data — a measure of the school’s overall impact on student learning — is worth another 5%.

Because teachers in nontesting grades do not receive value-added data, their classroom performance counts for 75% of their score. A component called “teacher-assessed student achievement data” counts for 10%, and the other factors count the same as they do for the other teachers. For both categories of teachers, the final score is then adjusted up or down based on a factor called “core professionalism,” which covers things like coming to work on time.

The value-added measure has been as polarizing in D.C. as it has been elsewhere because it ties teacher performance to factors they say they often can’t control. And the scores have been undermined by reports of cheating by teachers and administrators on the tests on which it is substantially based (Gillum & Bello, 2011). But the classroom observations are just as controversial. Under IMPACT, every teacher in the district is observed five times a year: three times by a school administrator (usually the principal) and twice by a “master educator,” an outside teacher trained in the same discipline. The observations take 30 minutes, and all but one of the administrator visits are unannounced. Based on them, teachers are ranked from 1 to 4. Critics say that 30 minutes is too short a time for an

evaluator to assess performance, and that the assessment of that performance is subjective. The evaluations allow for virtually no input from teachers and provide no way for the instructor to put the lesson or her students in context.

Combined with other factors, all these ratings produce an overall IMPACT score that translates into highly effective, effective, minimally effective, or ineffective. A rating of ineffective means the teacher is immediately subject to dismissal; a rating of minimally effective gives the teacher one year to improve or be fired; effective wins the teacher a standard contract raise; a highly effective rating qualifies the teacher for a bonus of up to \$25,000.

At the end of IMPACT’s second year, roughly 17% of teachers were eligible for bonuses ranging from \$3,000 to \$25,000. With a second consecutive year of highly effective ratings, 7% were eligible to have a base salary increase of up to \$27,000. Six percent of teachers were fired — 2% who were rated ineffective and 4% who received minimally effective ratings for the second year in a row. Thus it can be said that IMPACT has served a purpose as a sorter, separating the good from the bad.

But could those highly effective teachers have gotten even better? Could the ineffective ones have been turned around? Most important, what about the teachers in the vast middle of the pack? How can the district help them become highly effective? And is the teacher evaluation system the right place to do it?

## TEACHER RESPONSE

IMPACT has three stated purposes: to outline clear performance expectations, to provide clear feedback, and to ensure that every teacher has a plan for getting better and receives guidance on how to do so. It is on this third component — professional development — that many teachers give IMPACT its own low grade.

In faculty lounges and in chat rooms, D.C. teachers trade IMPACT complaints — about ratings that vary from one evaluator to the next, or about master educators who didn’t seem to understand what they were doing or appreciate the challenges presented by their students. Bill Rope, who teaches 3rd grade at Hearst Elementary School, is one of many who argue that IMPACT reduces teaching to a formula. He has also experienced what he calls the system’s inconsistency. Rope was rated highly effective last year, but in a subsequent evaluation, a different master educator gave him an overall score of 2.78 — toward the low end of effective. Although she gave Rope 3s and 4s on “higher-level understanding” and “correcting student misunderstanding,” she rated him only minimally effective at “maximizing instructional time.” Rope was also downgraded for giving students only two ways to engage in content “when more would have been appropriate.” The evaluator also rated Rope only minimally effective at “engaging students at all learning levels in rigorous work.”

After Rope complained that several of these observations were misplaced, the master educator took the unusual step of adjusting two of his scores, giving him a higher overall rating. But Rope echoes the complaints of many of his fellow educators when he says the system narrows the curriculum. Last year, Rope says, he knocked himself out satisfying all of IMPACT’s demands. “I did everything you were supposed to do,” he said, “and I hated it.” In short, teachers say IMPACT demands that they essentially teach to their own test.

IMPACT’s architects argue that good teachers routinely demonstrate every element on the Teaching and Learning Framework without thinking. “It’s not as if this is a new way of teaching,” insists Thompson. “Good teachers get high marks for doing what they are already doing.” Administrators have also checked scores and found significant differences only in less than 1% of teacher observations. Likewise, the district has found that the scores given by principals and master educators have been remarkably similar: In only five out of 3,500 evaluations was there a gap of larger than two points between master educator and principal scores. To make sure that that everyone considers the same performance to be worth the same grade, the master educators and the principals “norm” the scores; they watch videos of teachers in action, role playing, and discussing what constitutes a 2, a 3, and so on.

The experiences of Rope and other teachers aside, master educators say they have been pleasantly surprised with how willing teachers have been to engage with the evaluators even when

**In faculty lounges and in chat rooms, D.C. teachers trade IMPACT complaints.**



they don't like what they have to say. Cynthia Robinson-Rivers, a master educator specializing in early childhood education, says, "We expected more hostility [to the feedback sessions] but usually they go just fine. I evaluated 230 teachers last year, and I can only name four or five who were hostile." Teachers who disagree with their observation scores can appeal, although they rarely do and only 15% of appeals last year were successful. With rare exceptions, the IMPACT team reports, teachers generally assess themselves the way the evaluators do. "When the class didn't go well, teachers know it didn't go well," Robinson-Rivers says.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

IMPACT may be largely evaluative, but it would be incorrect to say that it is without a developmental function entirely. In particular, guidance on improving teaching comes through the post-observation feedback reports, which are thorough and specific. In a conference soon after the observation, the master educator explains the scores, then offers the teacher concrete advice on how he or she might improve. This is a distinct departure from past practice. Eric Bethel, a former elementary teacher who is now a master educator, told Education Sector he had never received instructional advice under the previous system, only a rating of "exceeds expectations." The master educator showed him, among other things, how he could use positive reinforcement to better control student behavior. "The observations allowed me to grow in very specific areas," he said.

The master educator can also serve to reinforce what the teacher is already doing, making a strong teacher even better. That was the case when master educator Matt Radigan informally observed Susan Haese, a 1st-grade teacher at Key Elementary School whom Radigan considered a 4. Afterward, he told her, "I want to celebrate what you did and repeat it." He then gave her very specific tips for building reading fluency, including having the students first read to themselves to build meaning, then read aloud as if they were on the radio. Radigan, a former instructional coach, says master educators often work with teachers after hours when they request it.

But as much as teachers appreciate this sort of feedback, it is not the same as formal development. And IMPACT very deliberately puts the development burden on the teacher — it is now up to the teachers to get themselves the help they need instead of making the principal responsible for providing it. "There is a shift," Thompson says. "Now we see the teacher as

taking a more active role."

Some teachers welcome this change. "For the first time in a very long time," one teacher is quoted as saying, "I finally felt like I was being respected as a professional, and that a process was put in place to hold me accountable for my performance. As a result, I began to become more interested in further developing my leadership skills as an educator" (Martinez, 2011).

### A BETTER WAY?

But others think a better system is in place just next door to D.C. in the highly regarded school system of Montgomery County, Md. The Teacher Professional Growth System, as it is intentionally named, specifically integrates evaluation, support, and development. Growth is the primary focus, evaluation the second.

A district with as many as 1,000 new teachers each year, Montgomery includes six standards for teacher performance, based on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, with criteria for how the standards are to be met (Montgomery County Public Schools, 2011). It provides training for evaluators and teachers; a professional growth cycle that integrates the formal evaluation year into a multiyear process of professional growth, with continual reflection on goals and progress meeting those goals; and formal evaluation with narrative assessments that provide qualitative feedback to teachers about their work. Under a Peer Assistance and Review program, consulting teachers — experienced educators who leave the classroom for three years — provide instructional support to new teachers and those not performing to standard. After these teachers have been given every opportunity and still don't improve, they can be dismissed. The district doesn't use test scores to judge teachers, but it uses them to inform discussions about instruction.

One big difference between the Montgomery County and DCPS systems is the size of the caseloads. Each of Montgomery's consulting teachers work with about 15 to 17 teachers, whereas D.C.'s master educators can have caseloads of up to 100. In and of itself, this sort of workload would seem to keep the master educators from focusing intensively on teachers who really need it — something Mark Simon believes is by design. Simon is a policy analyst at the Economic Policy Institute; he helped design Montgomery County's system when he was president of the Montgomery County Teachers Union. "It is not development or support work," he says. "It is simply rank-

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ing and rating, with a narrative hastily written according to a rubric . . . . The goal (of IMPACT) was to ID the worst teachers for firing and the best for bonuses. It was not intended to improve teaching” (Education Sector, 2011).

The D.C. system is often described as one that was “done to” teachers instead of “done with” them. Teachers say they had little input in its design and not enough time to get used to it before it took effect. The union was not a partner in developing the system the way it was in Montgomery County (D.C. law precludes union involvement in negotiating evaluations). In the first year of IMPACT, 92 appeals were submitted to the chancellor’s office (10 were granted). Last year, the chancellor’s office received 260 appeals, all of which are still pending. According to Simon, in Montgomery, nearly 500 teachers have been removed for performance reasons over 10 years, but that there are very few appeals or challenges. “There is a sense of legitimacy in the process,” he says.

### IMPACT NOW

In important respects, comparing D.C.’s school system to Montgomery County’s is an apples-and-oranges exercise, and an unfair one at that. Montgomery is a far more affluent county, and while it struggles with racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps, its students overall have consistently met a high standard of academic performance. D.C., by contrast, is urban, largely low-income, and predominantly black, with a history of dismal academic performance. IMPACT was a dramatic and necessary response to what could only be called a desperate situation for D.C.’s public education system and the children and families it serves. “If teachers are anxious because they have low scores, I empathize,” says Jason Kamras, chief of DCPS’s Office of Human Capital Management, “but at the end of the day, we have to hold the line on quality. I believe with every fiber of my being that we can’t have different standards for other people’s children than we have for our own.”

Yet Kamras and other district officials concede that IMPACT isn’t perfect, and they have listened to teachers, principals, and coaches and made changes in response. D.C.’s big push this year is connecting evaluation to development, as well as providing teachers with better academic and curricular support. Among other tools, the district is producing an online video library it calls “Reality P.D.” — clips of DCPS teachers demonstrating various aspects of the rubric and sharing tips. The district is also using data generated by IMPACT to improve instruction. In the first year, teachers consistently scored lowest on measures of rigor and probing for higher-level understanding. That finding led the district to further clarify and emphasize these skills in the revised framework and in professional development. The information leads to improvements at individual schools as well.

Thompson says the district is planning to take what he calls a “long top-to-bottom look” at IMPACT to determine

what significant revisions to the system, if any, are necessary. The review will include taking stock of evaluation designs and implementation lessons in other districts and states. So far, district officials say they are seeing a lot of similarities between IMPACT and other emerging evaluation systems: Versions of the teaching and learning rubric are being adapted and adopted in Chicago, Memphis, Baltimore, and Indiana.

As IMPACT passes through its third year, Kamras says he’s sensitive to the anxiety that teachers feel about the system but remains steadfast in his focus on accountability. “There is still a perception that IMPACT is a ‘gotcha,’ ” he says. “But I think the big thing has been getting over the hump. We went from zero accountability right to 100% accountability. So without changing the fundamentals, I want to reduce the anxiety level.” To hear teachers talk, he will have a better chance of succeeding if IMPACT’s focus on accountability is matched by professional support and development that is truly integral to the system.

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# RISING ABOVE *the* FLOODWATERS

TAP HELPS LOUISIANA SCHOOL REBUILD PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM

By Anthony Armstrong

**H**urricane Katrina blew across the St. Bernard Parish Public Schools district in Chalmette, La., on the morning of Aug. 29, 2005, bringing with it a wall of water that flooded everything for miles, putting the school system's 18 buildings under several feet of water filled with mud, gasoline, oil, dead fish, and other debris.

Eleven weeks later, long before any of the district's salvageable buildings were repaired, the district reopened with one unified school housed in temporary trailers on a football field parking lot. Before the hurricane, the district served 8,800 students. When school reopened, only 334 students returned.

Of the district's original 15 school buildings, eight were later deemed beyond repair and had to be demolished. The only middle school building to return to operation was N.P. Trist Middle School, which was recently recognized by the TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement for its gains in student and teacher learning.

## REBUILDING MORE THAN THE BUILDINGS

"When the St. Bernard school system started rebuild-

ing, we had a chance to not just rebuild the buildings but also reform the schools," said Trist principal Denise Pritchard. "Administrators and teachers spent a lot of time revamping the curriculum to make sure state-mandated grade-level expectations were met. We've had a lot of success, and TAP has been a part of that."

Pritchard was recently awarded a 2011 Milken Educator Award for gains the school has made under her leadership. Louisiana's School Performance Score for Trist has risen nearly 25%, from 88.3 in 2009, when Pritchard first joined Trist, to 109.9 in 2011. Pritchard, a 22-year educator, is quick to cite the contributions from staff and community members for the school's progress.

Pritchard also attributes part of the success at Trist to its adoption of the TAP system in 2008. The program aims to provide high-quality professional learning for teachers while also holding them accountable for their performance.

## THE TAP SYSTEM

The Milken Family Foundation, already known for its national teacher awards, first implemented the TAP system



GONZALES  
Denise Pritchard



Photo by WENDY GONZALES  
N.P. Trist Middle School, shown here in a November 2011 photo, was the only middle school in its district to reopen after Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Photo © SMILEY N. POOL/ Dallas Morning News/ Corbis

This photo was taken on the morning of Sept. 8, 2005, in Chalmette, La., showing floodwaters after Hurricane Katrina hit on Aug. 29. The St. Bernard Parish Public School District — including N.P. Trist Middle School — is centered in Chalmette.

in 2000 to address many of the challenges facing K-12 systems, including attracting more people to the teaching profession. The ongoing operation of TAP has since been taken over by the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), a nonprofit organization that works to ensure “a highly skilled, strongly motivated and competitively compensated teacher for every classroom in America.” With a growing body of research to validate TAP’s success, its popularity has grown in recent years and is predicted to reach 20,000 teachers in the 2011-12 school year.

Four core elements make up TAP’s strategy for improving teacher quality and retention:

- Multiple career paths;
- Ongoing applied professional growth;
- Performance-based compensation; and
- Instructionally focused accountability.

### MULTIPLE CAREER PATHS

TAP creates a tiered system of teaching roles that allow teachers to expand their professional career while remaining in the classroom. The different roles —career, mentor, and master teacher — empower teachers with the ability to determine their roles and career path as the system establishes a structure of ongoing leadership and support.

Before TAP, and before the establishment and recognition of a range of teacher leader roles, the primary option for teachers to advance in their careers was to move into administration. This was a difficult decision for many because it meant moving out of the classroom and away from working directly with children.

With TAP’s master and mentor teacher career paths, however, teachers can establish themselves as experts; take on more responsibility, for which they are compensated; and make an impact on a larger number of students — all while continuing to teach within their classrooms.

“Teachers must go through a rigorous process to apply to be a mentor or master teacher,” said Pritchard. “They interview, demonstrate that they use effective practices, show data that their

students are moving forward, and teach model lessons, which they often do in their cluster team meetings. It is important to see how they interact with students and teachers because they will eventually have tough conversations with both.”

Master and mentor teachers become members of the lead-

### ST. BERNARD PARISH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

St. Bernard Parish Public Schools went from close to 9,000 students before Hurricane Katrina struck in August 2005 to just over 300 students 11 weeks later. The district has grown steadily since recovery efforts began and now serves approximately 3,000 students.

View a video telling the story of hardships and rebirth during and after Hurricane Katrina at [www.stbernard.k12.la.us/ourstory.asp](http://www.stbernard.k12.la.us/ourstory.asp).

ership teams within the school, so in addition to having expert curricular knowledge and instructional skills, they must also demonstrate an ability to work with other adults. They participate in setting student learning goals and engage in teacher coaching, support, and evaluation to support teachers in reaching those goals. TAP provides training and certification to prepare principals and master and mentor teachers for these responsibilities.

According to Pritchard, TAP training can take place in a variety of ways. Leadership teams attend TAP institutes in various locations across the country for training and recertification each year. An executive master teacher assigned to each school by TAP to serve as a trainer at off-site meetings and as support at the school sites for leadership teams supplies ongoing support. “Our executive master teacher tailors her assistance to the needs of each school and each leadership team,” Pritchard said. “She is our point of contact with TAP; however, at any time I can email any of the TAP personnel at the state department and get an instant response.”

This leadership team model allows for local control in the school while also ensuring that leadership team members learn the latest in the research-based practices that support ongoing teacher learning.

### ONGOING APPLIED PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

The second element of the TAP system is a system of ongoing, job-embedded, high-quality professional learning. School staff use a collaborative, data-driven system of continuous improvement to plan and implement teacher professional learning according to the needs of teachers and their students. Teams of teachers grouped by grade or subject area meet weekly to plan, learn, and collaborate. The team meetings, also known as cluster groups, are focused on student needs, and are led by a master or mentor teacher. Teachers also receive individual coaching and classroom-centered support, based on teacher accountability evaluations given throughout the year. Master and mentor teachers and school administrators receive specialized training through TAP for these evaluations so that they score teachers

#### N.P. Trist Middle School

Meraux, La.

Enrollment: **471**

Staff: **29** teachers, **2** administrators

Racial/ethnic mix:

White:	<b>71%</b>
Black:	<b>24%</b>
Asian/Hispanic:	<b>2%</b>
Native American:	<b>3%</b>
Other:	<b>0%</b>

Limited English proficient: **2%**

Languages spoken: **English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic**

Free/reduced lunch: **73%**

Special education: **12%**

Contact: **Denise Pritchard**, principal

Email: [dpritchard@sbpsb.org](mailto:dpritchard@sbpsb.org)



fairly and consistently. Additionally, pre- and post-conversations about the evaluation are highly structured to help teachers better understand the learning that occurs in their classrooms.

**INSTRUCTIONALLY FOCUSED ACCOUNTABILITY**

Accountability measurements serve as formative feedback to drive individual coaching and team meetings. TAP uses a combination of teaching standards and student growth measurements. For the teaching standards, teachers are observed and scored on a 26-point rubric four to six times per year. Some of the evaluations include a preobservation conference, where the teacher and observer discuss the upcoming evaluation; all of the evaluations, though, include a post-conference with the teacher and observer to discuss observations and opportunities to strengthen practice.

According to Pritchard, teachers find these evaluations to be helpful for three reasons. First, teachers know exactly what they will be evaluated on before the evaluations begin; second, the post-conference provides clear direction for future growth; third, the scoring system offers feedback and guidance for every teacher, no matter their level of skill or expertise. To make sure that evaluators are consistent in their practices, the leadership team reviews the evaluations as well. This highly structured evaluation system helps reduce inconsistencies or grade inflations that can often occur.

“As evaluators, we will often have a preconference before the evaluation, where we sit with the teacher for about 30 to 45 minutes and they tell us about the lesson we will see,” Pritchard explained. “The teacher lets us know about the makeup of the classroom, anything special that is happening, prior learning that has taken place, and the goal of the lesson. This preconference tells us about how the teachers plan, what they are using to plan, if the data is up to date, etc. The observations use a rubric, but everything is scripted so that we have a wealth of information that we can analyze, score, and use to create an area of refinement and strength.”

The evaluator and the teacher come together in the post-conference to create a plan to make the teacher more effective. “It is very personal and nonthreatening,” Pritchard said. “The teacher is heavily involved, and when we are done with the post-conference, the teacher has a professional growth plan for working with mentors and other teachers to find ways to improve from the previous observation.”

To help document student growth, TAP implements a value-added system that measures how much individual students learn during the year. The value-added system also takes into account student growth schoolwide.

Gena Asevado, a science teacher and TAP mentor at Trist, feels that despite controversies about the accuracy of value-added measurements in general, confidence in TAP’s system stems from the frequency and variety of data sources. “We get so much data through the school, the district, and TAP that we

can pinpoint concerns ahead of time and address them immediately. Since the value-added assessments are more reflective, and we are so concentrated on student results in the here and now, I’m not concerned about the value-added portion when teaching.”

**PERFORMANCE-BASED COMPENSATION**

The fourth element in TAP’s system is the establishment of bonus pay for teachers based on three separate criteria. First, 50% of their performance awards are based on an average score of the multiple classroom observations they experienced throughout the year, scored against TAP’s teaching standards. Second, 30% of their compensation is based on value-added measurements of their classroom achievement growth. Finally, the remaining 20% is based on schoolwide achievement growth, another value-added measurement.

Additional salary increases are available for master and mentor teachers to compensate for the added roles, responsibilities, and time required to fulfill those duties.

<b>STUDENT SUCCESS</b> <i>Percentage of Trist students rating basic proficiency and above</i>		
	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
English language arts	<b>69%</b>	<b>76%</b>
Math	<b>62%</b>	<b>86%</b>
Science	<b>59%</b>	<b>78%</b>
Social studies	<b>59%</b>	<b>81%</b>

**FINDING THE TIME**

When Pritchard first arrived at Trist, she was concerned that it would be difficult to get teachers to commit the time needed for the added professional learning. Fortunately, her teachers already had contract time built into their schedules.

“All teachers in St. Bernard Parish are given a planning period per day,” Pritchard said. “This is part of the contract for all teachers in our district whether the school is TAP or not. The teachers at Trist Middle School attend two TAP cluster meetings per week during their planning periods. The remaining three planning periods per week are used by the teachers to analyze data, prepare lessons and activities, communicate with parents, etc.”

Pritchard credits TAP for helping her find additional time for added professional learning, although she admits that giving up leadership responsibilities was initially frightening for her. “I am much better at time management now because the teachers are empowered and can handle a lot of stuff themselves,” she said. “Plus, one of the great things about TAP is that we have four mentors and one master teacher. In the past, we had an assistant principal and the principal conducting observations, but now I have five other sets of eyes in classrooms at all times.

It is powerful to have that many people helping.”

TAP is not an end to the challenges in professional learning, Pritchard said, but she feels confident that it is worth the effort to implement. “TAP is not easy. It is time-consuming for the principal and assistant principal, and there are still so many other things that pull on a principal’s time, like behavior incidents, but having the TAP model allows us to keep growing.”

### TEACHER IMPLEMENTATION

In addition to using multiple measures to calculate teacher compensation, TAP’s popularity also stems from the roles that teachers play in its implementation. Before a TAP system is brought into a district, at least 70% of the teachers must vote to approve its adoption.

Asevado immediately saw the benefits TAP brought to the teaching climate. “Teachers are no longer afraid to ask for help,” she said. “The first year we implemented TAP, it was difficult to get people to open up and share their problems. There was a stigma with asking for help. It was viewed as being unable to handle something, but now it is not a problem. The teachers can talk

through different ways to solve problems. As mentor teachers, we just had to show the teachers that we were here to help them, not judge.”

Asevado sees three clear contributions that TAP makes to teacher and student learning: It is collaborative, data-driven, and job-embedded. “TAP is more structured than a typical mentoring program. We get help with teaching strategies and other operating support. We have mentor teachers to co-teach with and bounce ideas with.”

According to Asevado, TAP focuses the teachers on student

**“Every teacher, regardless of current performance, has a pathway to improvement.”**

— Gary Stark, NIET president and CEO

**Source: Stark, G. (n.d.)**  
Panel discussion: *More than measurement: Lessons from TAP teacher evaluation* (Video file). Available at [www.tapsystem.org/newsroom/newsroom.taf?page=videos&vid=1093](http://www.tapsystem.org/newsroom/newsroom.taf?page=videos&vid=1093).

### TEACHER BONUS PAY

TAP’s teacher bonus pay is based on three criteria:

- 50%** Teacher evaluations based on TAP’s Teaching Skills, Knowledge and Responsibilities Performance Standards;
- 30%** Individual classroom achievement growth; and
- 20%** Schoolwide achievement growth.

**Source:** *The TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement* (n.d.). Available at [www.tapsystem.org](http://www.tapsystem.org).

learning needs through its frequent analysis of student data. “We learn how to evaluate data from benchmark and district-wide assessments. Since we meet with our cluster teams each week, teachers can quickly learn techniques to meet needs of their students. As mentors, we can meet with the leadership team, go out into classrooms and start modeling techniques that the teachers need, and they can implement them. This is much more immediate than traditional professional development since there is no waiting for ‘PD day.’”

For many teachers, the biggest challenge in implementing TAP comes from within. “Admitting that we are not perfect, allowing observers into our classes, and then opening up with someone else is always difficult,” Asevado said. “As teachers, we think we have teaching down pat, so sometimes it hurts to be told that we can do it better.”

### RESULTS

Reflecting upon the changes she has seen over the last two years, Pritchard credits TAP for a many of the improvements in the school’s learning culture. “TAP gave us a safe structure where teachers don’t feel threatened talking about performance. We have become a community that speaks freely with each

### EFFECTIVENESS STUDIES

According to research, TAP has proven effective at “raising student achievement, improving the quality of instruction, and increasing the ability of high-need schools to recruit, retain and support teachers.” Below are some of the findings:

- TAP serves schools with high-need populations of students.
- TAP schools show consistently high rates of student achievement growth, outperforming similar schools in the same states.
- TAP’s classroom evaluation measures produce more valid performance ratings than do traditional teacher evaluations.
- TAP teachers show growth over time in the quality of their instruction.
- TAP increases the recruitment and retention of highly effective teachers.
- Teachers and principals report high levels of support for TAP as well as a high degree of collegiality in TAP schools.

**Source: National Institute for Excellence in Teaching. (2011, October).** *TAP research summary*. Washington, DC: Author.

other about how kids are doing and how we can make sure they do better.”

Pritchard notes that she and several members of the community, including teachers, staff, and parents, were initially hesitant to raise the level of expectations and the rigor of the curriculum for students; however, the dedication from her staff and district dedication has clearly paid off. Since Trist rebuilt its professional learning system using TAP, student performance scores have improved noticeably. In addition to Trist’s state school performance scores improving almost 25%, student assessments for 2010 show that students performing at basic and above proficiency increased by an additional seven percentage points in English language arts, 24 points in math, 19 points in science, and 22 points in social studies.

Trist’s improvements in student growth have earned the school recognition from the TAP system for achieving the highest possible value-added score of five. TAP uses a scale of one to five, with a target of three for proficiency. Additionally, Trist’s leadership team was also recognized for the school’s successes. “They deserve this recognition for how hard they worked, came together, and changed the school in remarkable ways,” Pritchard said.

Pritchard was the only Louisiana recipient of this year’s national 2011 Milken Family Foundation Educator Award and \$25,000 cash prize, awarded for Trist’s accomplishments while under Pritchard’s leadership. For the school’s successes, Pritchard credits the dedication and efforts of her staff and the rigorous practices she has learned through the TAP system.

### STILL REBUILDING THE DISTRICT

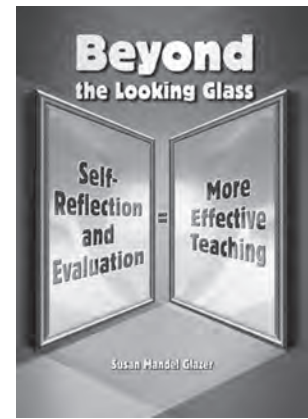
Six years after Hurricane Katrina, within the destruction and rebirth of the parish, a renewed sense of importance for education has given rise to accomplishments no one considered feasible before. The commitment of the teachers, administrators, staff, family, and students was

**The student body at Trist continues to grow each year as more families return to the parish.**

evidenced in the parish’s recent 6th Annual Day of Reflection, a commemorative breakfast attended by more than 600 community partners, members, and supporters of the St. Bernard Parish Public Schools. Each year the breakfast features multiple presentations by Chalmette High students. The theme of this year’s breakfast centered on the growth of St. Bernard in the past six years.

The student body at Trist continues to grow each year as more families return to the parish. Confident in their ability to meet the needs of future students, Pritchard, her faculty, and staff exemplify the collective commitment to student success that is at the heart of all high-quality teacher learning. “After Hurricane Katrina,” said Pritchard, “there was very little for students to do after school. There was no movie theater, no bowling alley, no skating rink. It was very important to make our school a place where students wanted to be, so almost every one of our teachers is a coach or sponsor of an after-school activity. We have 30 different student teams, organizations, or clubs. It is a complicated process to keep it all together, and it couldn’t be done without the unbelievable dedication of our teachers, support staff, and parents. Building a successful school is much more complicated than simply providing effective teachers in the classroom; however, everything we do, including professional development ... has to be centered around supporting what takes place in the classroom.”

**Anthony Armstrong (anthony.armstrong@learningforward.org) is publications editor at Learning Forward. ■**



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A discussion protocol

# INTEGRATING

INDIVIDUAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING  
INTO COMPREHENSIVE LEARNING SYSTEMS

When individual professional learning is introduced as a component of reformed teacher evaluation systems, it simultaneously becomes a part of a district professional learning plan. As a result, it is important that leaders consider the linkages between teacher evaluation systems and the individual professional learning as well as connections among individual professional learning and the other parts of the professional learning system. Leaders have a responsibility to ensure all professional learning connects and supports the achievement of district and school goals for educators and students.

The tools that follow offer suggestions for examining and discussing professional learning within and beyond the context of teacher evaluation systems.



## Student learning needs should drive professional learning

*Hayes Mizell, Learning Forward's distinguished senior fellow, commenting recently on the topic of teacher evaluation, noted:*

The fact that many districts will now add a new dimension to their professional development agenda called targeted professional development seems to implicitly raise the issue of what should be the priority use of what are currently limited professional development resources.

One big question is whether teacher evaluation, and the professional development dimensions of it, will swamp attention to and resource allocations for other worthy professional development roles. One possibility is that school systems will spread professional resources among all possible professional development functions.

Both scenarios surface the real problem — that people are not thinking about professional development in a coherent way, and that leads to it lurching from one purpose to another. There is no anchor philosophy or beliefs or use of professional development, so everyone seizes on professional development as a response to whatever they perceive as a particular problem. It is important to remember that student learning needs should drive professional development.



Mizell

- **Start the discussion.** Connecting teacher evaluation and individual professional learning, pp. 54-55.
- **Continue to examine.** Examining professional learning comprehensively, pp. 56-58.

# Start the discussion

## CONNECTING TEACHER EVALUATION AND INDIVIDUAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

As districts begin to implement new evaluation systems and expand their current professional learning system to provide for individual support, stakeholders will benefit from answering several questions related to both processes. Use the questions below and on p. 55 to guide a preliminary discussion as new systems are implemented. Seek clarity about the intersection of these systems and think about how these systems support the district's broader goals for professional learning and student learning.

**INTEGRATING**  
INDIVIDUAL  
PROFESSIONAL  
LEARNING INTO  
COMPREHENSIVE  
LEARNING SYSTEMS

	TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEM	INDIVIDUAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
What principles, beliefs, or assumptions guide our systems?		
What is its purpose?		
What are the core processes?		
What are roles and responsibilities for those being evaluated?		



	TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEM	INDIVIDUAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
What are roles and responsibilities for those conducting evaluation?		
What are possible roles and contributions for central office administrators?		
Are there contributions, roles, or responsibilities for other support staff, i.e. coaches, resource staff, mentors, etc.?		
What is the timeline?		
What resources (human, fiscal, physical) are needed and available?		
What are the measures for success?		

# Continue to examine

## EXAMINING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMPREHENSIVELY

To clarify the roles and purposes of all professional learning in the district, districts might consider convening stakeholders in professional development (including teachers, teacher leaders, principals, district office administrators, and professional development providers) to discuss potential responses to the questions posed on pp. 57-58 and add other questions relevant to its unique teacher evaluation and professional development systems.

It will be useful in the discussion to identify common expectations and responses across items and to continue the conversation even when there may be disagreements across the various groups. Clear and consistent expectations for each professional development component contribute to the strength and success of the overall plan. In addition, as stakeholders engage others in these conversations, they will find new opportunities for increasing the impact from individual classrooms to teams to schools to systems and to communities so that these efforts accelerate investment and produce widespread, deep changes in student learning.

As a final stage in the discussion, stakeholders might consider the principles, beliefs, or assumptions that underlie all the answers and the goals the district sets out to achieve with its professional development. Write a vision statement and guiding principles as a result of this conversation.

### INTEGRATING

INDIVIDUAL  
PROFESSIONAL  
LEARNING INTO  
COMPREHENSIVE  
LEARNING SYSTEMS

### Professional learning serves three purposes

- 1. Individual learning** to enhance individual competencies related to performance standards and individual results.
- 2. School and team-based** (grade level, subject area, vertical) to ensure consistency and quality in instruction, curriculum implementation, assessment, and student results and alignment with improvement plans.
- 3. Program implementation** to ensure high fidelity of implementation with district programs such as curriculum, social skills, etc.

Source: Garet, M.S., Ludwig, M., Yoon, K., Wayne, A., Birman, B., & Milanowski, A. (2011). *Making professional development more strategic: A conceptual model for district decisionmakers*. Paper presented at AERA, April 2011. New Orleans, LA.

CONSIDER LEARNING'S REACH		
Individual learning		Individual students and classes
Team and schoolwide learning		Whole grade levels, subject-area classes, entire school
Program implementation		Whole grade level, subject-area classes, cross-district groups

**EXAMINING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMPREHENSIVELY**

QUESTIONS	Individual targeted professional learning	Team-based/schoolwide professional learning	Program implementation professional learning
What are district examples of professional learning?			
What data inform learning goals?			
How are learning designs determined?			
What is the role of collaboration?			
How is success measured?			



**EXAMINING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMPREHENSIVELY, *continued***

QUESTIONS	Individual targeted professional learning	Team-based/schoolwide professional learning	Program implementation professional learning
Who is responsible for measuring success?			
How is progress monitored?			
Who is responsible for monitoring progress?			
What are typical artifacts used as evidence of change in teacher practice?			
What are typical artifacts used as evidence of change in student learning?			



Guerra



Nelson

## The ability to value diversity requires extensive, ongoing learning experiences

Culturally proficient educators continuously assess school policies, systems, and procedures to determine if they favor some groups over others. When educators discover inequities, they transform the policy or practice to be more culturally responsive. This assessment is not limited to instruction, support services, and parent involvement, but also includes other aspects such as hiring, retention, and supervision of personnel. Aware that culture affects everything in the work environment, culturally responsive educators scrutinize activities that are easily taken for granted, such as the job interview. In most schools, unfortunately, inequities in these areas go undetected, as the following example illustrates.

Two women interviewed for a position at a school with a predominantly white faculty (90%) and student body (70%). Since the number of students of color in this school had risen in recent years, the faculty received one day of diversity training, which concluded with the faculty making a commitment to value

diversity. Let's peek in on the interview process.

### SEARCH COMMITTEE DEBRIEFING

After weeks of screening applicants, the search committee narrowed the pool to two candidates. One applicant, Susan Walker, was originally from the Midwest and a recent graduate with a Ph.D. in instructional technology. The other, Miranda Garcia, was from a city along the Texas-Mexico border. She, too, had just graduated in the same field, but with a master's degree. Members of the search committee, when asked for feedback on the two applicants, said they wanted to hire Walker because "she's a better fit."

"What do you mean when you say she's a better fit?" asked the principal. After a long pause, one committee member said, "We're more comfortable with her because she's just like us." Others listening to the discussion nodded in agreement. This response was disconcerting. Immediately prior to the interviews, the search committee had made its hiring criteria clear. The committee was intent upon hiring a

K-12 educator with a graduate degree in instructional technology, strong instructional and interpersonal skills, and, most importantly, grant-writing experience. Garcia met all five criteria. She had been awarded several grants and came with references lauding her leadership, teaching, technology skills, and ability to effectively work with others. Walker had excellent references commending her extensive knowledge of technology, service as a university teacher assistant, strong communication, research, and writing skills, and a publication record. However, Walker had no public school experience, grant-writing skills, or record of winning grants.

Rather than determine the best-qualified individual for the position by evaluating each applicants' education, knowledge, and experiences against the job requisites, committee members seemed to be making this decision on an unstated, but commonly understood, principle of likeness, not diversity. In their eyes, Walker was right for the job because she thought, related, and communicated like most of the search committee members. Garcia did not relate to the committee in the same way. Despite their stated commitment to value diversity, these committee members viewed Garcia's interactions as deficits or obstacles to overcome, which in their eyes made her too different to be a member of their team. What transpired in the interviews for the committee to come to this conclusion?

In each issue of *JSD*, Patricia L. Guerra and Sarah W. Nelson write about the importance of and strategies for developing cultural awareness in teachers and schools. Guerra (pg16@txstate.edu) is an assistant professor and Nelson (swnelson@txstate.edu) is an associate professor in the Department of Education and Community Leadership at Texas State University-San Marcos. Guerra and Nelson are co-founders of Transforming Schools for a Multicultural Society (TRANSFORMS). Columns are available at [www.learningforward.org/news/authors/guerranelson.cfm](http://www.learningforward.org/news/authors/guerranelson.cfm).

### **WALKER'S INTERVIEW**

When Walker was introduced to the search committee by the principal, she looked each member in the eye, extended her hand, and, while calling each member by name, said, "Hello, I'm Susan. It's nice to meet you." As Walker took a seat, she made a humorous comment, which made everyone laugh and eased tension in the room. After engaging in a few minutes of small talk, the principal asked if Walker was ready to start. She said yes and turned her attention to the group. As members of the group posed questions, Walker answered each one directly and concisely while maintaining eye contact with the individual asking the question and glancing at other committee members from time to time. In requesting clarification on an interview question, Walker addressed the principal by her first name. When asked to name her strengths, Walker forthrightly discussed four or five strengths in detail. After the interview concluded, Walker thanked each committee member, shook each one's hand, and left.

### **GARCIA'S INTERVIEW**

After being introduced to the committee by the principal, Garcia acknowledged the search committee by saying hello and quietly taking a seat. She then turned her attention to the principal, ready for the interview to start. When the principal asked if she had any trouble finding the school and if she would like a bottle of water, Garcia replied, "No, ma'am" to both questions. As members asked each interview question, Garcia made eye contact with the individual posing the question, but immediately turned her attention back to the principal while responding. Her responses were circuitous, often seemingly irrelevant, and lengthy except when asked to identify her strengths. When asked this question, Garcia paused for what seemed like a long time. She then

named one strength. When asked to elaborate, she appeared reluctant to do so. Although Garcia responded to each question in great detail, she did not seem to answer them. Like Walker, Garcia asked for clarification on a question, but she addressed the principal as "Dr. Stevens." At the conclusion of the interview, Garcia thanked the principal, smiled and nodded goodbye to the committee, then left the room.

### **CULTURE CLASH**

After reading this case, some might conclude Garcia is timid, lacks self-confidence, rambles, is not very bright, or is rude. However, culturally proficient educators would recognize the cultural differences underlying Walker's and Garcia's interactions. To them, Garcia's interactions are a different style rather than a deficiency.

Simply put, culturally responsive educators understand Walker likely comes from a culture that highly values individual identity and achievement, equality, and explicit communication. Walker strives to stand out in the interview by articulating her extensive knowledge of technology and highlighting her many strengths. Since Walker believes each committee member will have input into the hiring decision, she connects personally with each one by using first names, shaking hands, maintaining direct eye contact, chatting, and making members laugh. More importantly, her explicit communication style matches that of the committee's. Each answer is precise, brief, and to the point. Since committee members have to infer little, they easily understand her communication. Culturally proficient educators understand that when a candidate and search committee members are from similar cultural backgrounds, they also share similar expectations for interviewing.

Culturally proficient educators also recognize Garcia may come from a

culture that highly values group identity and success, unequal distribution of power by status and privilege, and implicit communication. She strives to fit in rather than stand out. She is reluctant to discuss her strengths and accomplishments because she believes focusing on individual success divides rather than unites faculty. She focuses her attention on the principal when responding as a sign of respect for the principal's position of authority and because she assumes that, as the person in the position of authority, the principal will be making the hiring decision. Most importantly, culturally responsive educators understand that candidates like Garcia answer the questions using a different communication style. Garcia's responses were conveyed not only through the words she used to express herself, but also through context (i.e. shared experiences, nonverbal communication). With this communication style, committee members must infer meaning. Those who are unfamiliar with this communication style may struggle to follow its indirect and detailed nature and often end up confused. Culturally proficient educators realize that because Garcia and committee members come from different cultures, they also have different expectations for interviewing. Moreover, they know that unless search committees develop a cultural lens, Garcia and others like her are not likely to be hired. This makes their commitment to value diversity another well-intended but empty promise.

As this case illustrates, the ability to value diversity requires more than one day of training. It requires extensive, ongoing learning experiences that help educators develop a deep understanding of how culture influences people's thinking, communication, and actions and an understanding of the way culture underlies all systems, policies, procedures, and practices of the school. ■





## Vulnerability is power in leadership and relationships

Every family has its stories, its inside jokes. One of my family’s is that, no matter what question someone asks of me, my answer is frequently, “I don’t know, but I’m delighted you thought I did.” The fact is, I really don’t know. And the older I get, the more I feel like an ecstatic Scrooge, dancing around in his nightgown at the end of *A Christmas Carol*, singing, “I don’t know anything. I never did know anything. But now I KNOW that I don’t know anything.” It frightened his housekeeper, but what happiness, what freedom. Not knowing, not having all the answers, and not *needing* to have the answers becomes a leader. I highly recommend it. People will want to pull up a chair and sit close to you, a real human being, and share *their* answers, which are often astoundingly good.

— Susan Scott

### By Deli Moussavi-Bock

Looking back over the course of my career, I realize I missed some amazing opportunities because of a belief that I had to figure something out completely on my own or because of a desire to do something perfectly. Now I’ve come to view perfection as counter to growth, risk, learning, and innovation and, most importantly, authenticity.

The definition of a Fierce Conversation is one in which you come out from behind yourself, into the conversation, and make it real. Authentic, genuine, real, whatever you call it — we know it when we see it or hear it. In *Fierce Conversations*, Susan Scott writes, “Authenticity isn’t something you have. It’s something you choose.”

I have had the good fortune to work with Scott during the past eight years.

I’ll never forget when she told me years ago that she wrote *Fierce Conversations* for herself. The transparency of that statement shifted my context about leadership and the personal nature of it. That conversation created a huge context shift for me. I thought, “Wait a second, I don’t need to have all the answers, and I can admit that I continue to learn? How human, how irresistible!” Since then, I’ve been in the company of extraordinary leaders and been witness to the raw power of vulnerability in leadership. I’ve learned that if I want to fully embrace authenticity, I need to be willing to make myself vulnerable.

Given this, for years I have been mesmerized by the power of vulnerability in relationships and was thrilled to watch Brene Brown’s TEDx talk on vulnerability. Brown is a research professor at the University

of Houston Graduate College of Social Work. She has spent 10 years studying vulnerability, courage, authenticity, and shame, and discovered in her research that “in order for connection to happen, we have to allow ourselves to be seen, really seen ... deeply seen.” In her research, Brown found that people who had high self-worth “had the courage to be imperfect. They had the compassion to be kind first to themselves and then to others. They had connection as a result of authenticity. They were willing to let go of who they should be in order to be who they were, which you have to absolutely do for connection. They fully embraced vulnerability” (Brown, 2010).

Vulnerability is where our greatest untapped source of power lies, a



Moussavi-Bock

In each issue of *JSD*, Susan Scott ([susan@fierceinc.com](mailto:susan@fierceinc.com)) explores aspects of communication that encourage meaningful collaboration. Scott, author of *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success At Work & In Life, One Conversation at a Time* (Penguin, 2002) and *Fierce Leadership: A Bold Alternative to the Worst “Best” Practices of Business Today* (Broadway Business, 2009), leads Fierce Inc. ([www.fierceinc.com](http://www.fierceinc.com)), which helps companies around the world transform the conversations that are central to their success. Fierce in the Schools carries this work into schools and higher education.

Columns are available at [www.learningforward.org](http://www.learningforward.org). © Copyright, Fierce Inc., 2011.

key ingredient of a leader and also of a culture that creates openness, truth telling, innovation, and most importantly, connection.

Vulnerability is essential for connection between human beings. In summing up her research during her talk, Brown says, “We are here to connect, neurobiologically. This is what it’s all about. It doesn’t matter whether you talk to people who work in social justice and mental health and abuse and neglect, what we know is that connection, the ability to feel connected, is — neurobiologically, that’s how we’re wired — it’s why we’re here.”

### WHEN WE GET IT WRONG

Often we revert to behavior that makes us seem invulnerable, even when we know better. We present an image of ourselves as know-it-all or work hard in a vain attempt to actually know it all. Rarely does the know-it-all, invulnerable, perfectionist approach get us the results we’re looking for long-term. Why? No single person knows it all or has all the answers. It’s implausible for anyone to take this position. And it’s hard to relate to a person like this.

I don’t want to confuse a know-it-all, invulnerable approach with high standards. Having high expectations of yourself and others leads to continuous learning and improvement. A perfectionist mindset contributes to a culture where ego and striving for infallibility become more important than honesty, solid relationships, and the results we actually want.

The problems with a know-it-all or perfectionist mindset show up one conversation at a time:

**Inauthenticity:** Inauthenticity creates an environment where presenting an image of ourselves is more important than being truthful. We can sniff inauthenticity from a mile away. As Jim Sorensen puts it, it doesn’t matter how good your message is if people don’t experience it as true.

**Fear:** Perfectionism produces a cover-your-rear-end culture of fear, finger-pointing, and failure to execute. Fear is only a short-term motivator. Long-term, it creates a scarcity-focused, punitive environment with a resentfully compliant workforce.

**Confusing our roles with our selves:** People become one with their roles, and they speak from their titles rather than speaking from their hearts. The latter is what gets people to commit at a deep level, and you can’t get that from a title.

### PRACTICING VULNERABILITY AND AUTHENTICITY

Pay attention to the conversations in your team, in your school — are people simply trying to prove they’re right, are they speaking with or to each other? Are they going into the conversation willing to listen to learn? Observe the undercurrent of the conversation. What’s really going on? Find out and address it.

Authenticity is a behavior we choose to practice moment-to-moment. It’s OK to fall off the bandwagon occasionally. We’re not perfect. Just remember, leadership is first and foremost about behavior. Anyone can talk a good talk.

Hold your own feet to the fire. Are we being honest with ourselves about our fears, strengths, weaknesses, about our behavior and the way we show up in our conversations? Ask yourself, what am I pretending not to know? And also, what am I pretending to know? Whose reality do I need to interrogate? Maybe it’s my own. It takes confidence to admit you don’t have the answers to everything. It’s the path to real progress.

When you shift your mindset from “I know it all” or “I need to know it all” to a belief where each person owns a piece of the truth, you’re talking about a true learning mindset. Such a mindset creates an environment of collective learning where everyone involved takes joy in learning.

### PRACTICING VULNERABILITY

Practicing vulnerability requires us to put away the masks we wear and name the truth with good intention. The most powerful thing we can do to create a culture of authenticity is to model it. Allow yourself to be vulnerable, to be transparent, and model the kind of behavior that invites others to put the truth on the table in a way that moves the relationship forward.

**Let yourself be seen.** It’s a risk, and there’s no way to get the results you want without taking a risk. You have to expose who you are. If you’re scared, admit it. Confidence does not mean being without fear. It’s having fear and moving through it anyway.

**Embrace your imperfections.** Be yourself. Don’t project the image of your idealized self. Earn people’s respect, not only through your competence and triumphs, but also by admitting and debriefing your misses. Be confident enough to say, “I don’t have all the answers.”

**Speak from your heart, not your title.** As the old saying goes, people don’t care what you know until they know you care. If you achieve this, people eventually willingly receive your message, no matter how difficult.

At the end of her TEDx talk, Brown says, “Give me a generation that has these qualities — high self-worth, vulnerability, and connection, and we’ll solve today’s problems.” I’ll add: Give us an organization, a team, a culture that has these qualities, and watch them change the world. It’s possible.

### REFERENCE

**Brown, B. (2010, June).** *The power of vulnerability.* Video from TEDx Houston. Available at [www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/brene\\_brown\\_on\\_vulnerability.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/brene_brown_on_vulnerability.html).

•  
**Deli Moussavi-Bock (deli@fierceinc.com) is the director of training for Fierce in the Schools. ■**



## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IQ

### [www.learningforward.org/news/tools](http://www.learningforward.org/news/tools)

Stimulate conversation about what educators and stakeholders know about professional learning with Learning Forward's professional learning IQ quiz in the fall issue of *Tools for Learning Schools*. This test is designed to surface perspectives and assumptions about professional development.

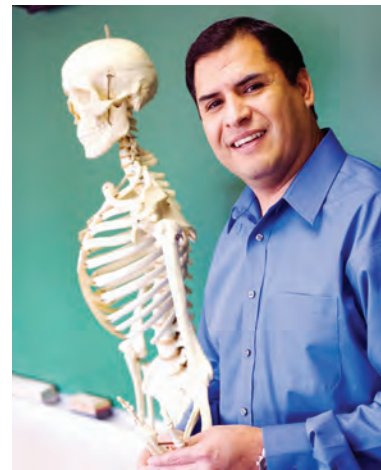
Each question and answer includes a source citation so users can locate the original material to delve deeper into the information.



## GET IMMERSED IN THE STANDARDS

### [www.learningforward.org/standards](http://www.learningforward.org/standards)

Learning Forward offers multiple ways for educators to become immersed in the Standards for Professional Learning. Read in-depth elaborations of each standard; view videos of practitioners talking about the importance of the standards; access printed versions of a four-page quick reference guide or a bookmark to pass out to your peers or learning teams. New resources are released each month to support implementation.



## TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT TEACHING

### [www.learningforward.org/blog](http://www.learningforward.org/blog)

*Frederick Brown, Learning Forward's director of strategy and development, imagines the possibilities presented by new technology and how that technology can be leveraged to support educator learning.*



Brown

**T**echnology has always had a place in education, but did the technology alone transform teaching and learning? We all know the answer. Great teachers enable great learning, and technology has the potential to deepen, scale, and sustain that learning. I would argue this is true for both student and adult learning."

## ADVOCATING FOR HIGH-QUALITY LEARNING

### [www.learningforward.org/standfor/advocating.cfm](http://www.learningforward.org/standfor/advocating.cfm)

Read Learning Forward's requested changes to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Proposed revisions include six technical amendments and four substantive changes to the definition of professional development included in the bill recently released by the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions. View the marked-up definition and Learning Forward's requested changes and rationale.





## **THE ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING:**

Professional learning moves vision, framework, and performance standards into action.

*By Joellen Killion and Stephanie Hirsh*

Effective teaching emerges from a vision for teaching and learning, an instructional framework, standards for student learning, and performance expectations for educators coupled with a convergence of policy, planning, and goals at the state, school system, and school levels. Professional learning is the single most powerful pathway to promote continuous improvement in teaching.

## **WHAT MAKES A GOOD TEACHER?**

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation digs for answers with its Measures of Effective Teaching project.

*By Stephanie Hirsh*

Vicki Phillips, director of education, for the college ready program at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, talks with Stephanie Hirsh, Learning Forward's executive director, about the foundation's investment in effective teaching, and in particular about the role of professional learning.

## **THE VIEW FROM THE SEATS:**

Student input provides a clearer picture of what works in schools.

*By Tracy Crow*

A new voice — student perceptions — has emerged as a valuable source of information for districts to identify, monitor, and assess teacher effectiveness. A framework called the Seven C's is delivering data on student engagement, opening the door to improved professional learning.

## **MEASUREMENT MAKEOVER:**

Florida district revamps teacher evaluation to focus on student achievement.

*By Valerie von Frank*

Hillsborough County (Fla.) Public Schools' new teacher evaluation system uses multiple measures, including peer and mentor observations and student learning data. The makeover gives teachers a clearer understanding of what the district's expectations are and what strategies can help teachers improve their practice.

## **LESSONS FROM D.C.'S EVALUATION SYSTEM:**

Teachers give IMPACT low marks on support and professional development.

*By Susan Headden and Elena Silva*

D.C.'s controversial evaluation system sets clear expectations for instruction and holds teachers to well-defined standards of performance. But the program has earned criticism from teachers who say it is rigid and punitive and forces them to teach in an overly prescriptive way. More important, teachers say that in its rush to strengthen accountability, IMPACT misses what they say they need most — greater support and more meaningful professional development.

## **RISING ABOVE THE FLOODWATERS:**

TAP helps Louisiana school rebuild professional learning program.

*By Anthony Armstrong*

Hurricane Katrina destroyed the St. Bernard Parish Public Schools district in 2005. The only middle school building to return to operation was N.P. Trist Middle School, which was recently recognized by the TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement for its gains in student and teacher learning.



**coming up**  
 in February 2012 issue:  
 Resources

**INDEX OF ADVERTISERS**

The Breakthrough Coach..... 39  
 Christopher-Gordon..... 51  
 Corwin ..... 13  
 Eye on Education..... 29  
 Headsprout..... 37  
 International Reading Association..... 27  
 Just ASK Publications & Professional  
 Development..... 34, outside back cover  
 The MASTER Teacher® ..... inside back cover  
 PDK International ..... 15  
 Pearson ..... 21  
 School Improvement Network..... 1  
 Solution Tree..... 17, inside front cover  
 Success at the Core..... 31  
 Teachscape..... 35  
 The Wallace Foundation..... 23

**columns**

**Cultural proficiency:**

The ability to value diversity requires extensive, ongoing learning experiences.

*By Patricia L. Guerra and Sarah W. Nelson*

Interviews with two job candidates illustrate cultural differences that can affect hiring decisions.

**Collaborative culture:**

Vulnerability is power in leadership and relationships.

*By Susan Scott and Deli Moussavi-Bock*

Vulnerability is a key ingredient of a culture that creates openness, truth telling, innovation, and connection.

**From the director:**

No more excuses — let’s get busy with the challenges at hand.

*By Stephanie Hirsh*

Everyone has an important role to play in closing the implementation gap through more effective professional learning.

**call for articles**

**Theme:** Outcomes

**Manuscript deadline:** Feb. 15, 2012

**Issue:** October 2012

**Theme:** Leadership

**Manuscript deadline:** April 15, 2012

**Issue:** December 2012

• Please send manuscripts and questions to Christy Colclasure ([christy.colclasure@learningforward.org](mailto:christy.colclasure@learningforward.org)).

• Notes to assist authors in preparing a manuscript are at [www.learningforward.org/news/jsd/guidelines.cfm](http://www.learningforward.org/news/jsd/guidelines.cfm).

## New trustees elected

*Learning Forward members elected two new members to the Board of Trustees. Clara Howitt of Windsor, Ontario, and Myra Whitney of Memphis, Tenn., will begin their three-year terms at the conclusion of the 2011 Annual Conference in Anaheim in December.*

**Clara Howitt** is superintendent of curriculum, professional learning, and leadership development K-12 for the Greater Essex County District School Board in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. A seven-year member of Learning Forward, she is a graduate of the 2009 Learning Forward Academy, a member of the Conference Program Planning Committee, an organizer and member of the Ontario Affiliate, and partners with the Ontario Principals' Council to ensure learning opportunities throughout the province. She makes contributions to the field of professional learning by engaging

in research and program evaluations; mobilizing knowledge through publications and presentations; and working with first-year superintendents in Ontario. Her goal is to support Learning Forward and its affiliates in helping administrators, professional developers, and teacher leaders to recognize and celebrate the new standards.



**Myra Whitney** is associate superintendent and executive director of professional development for Memphis City Schools in Memphis, Tenn. A seven-year member of Learning Forward,



Whitney served on the Tennessee host committee for the 2006 Annual Conference, was a member of the 2009 Learning Forward Academy, presented at conferences, and promoted and organized conference attendance. She also implemented Taking the Lead training for 400 district coaches and 200 principals and training for every school for instructional teams. She instituted the use of the Standards Assessment Inventory within the district and

is a participant in the Big 35, a network of 35 large school systems that Learning Forward created and facilitated to reduce the student achievement gap. Her vision for Learning Forward is that it continue intensive professional learning for teachers, coaches, and teacher leaders as well as for new opportunities for school administrators and superintendents.

### **book club**

REALIZING THE PROMISE  
OF 21ST-CENTURY EDUCATION:  
AN OWNER'S MANUAL

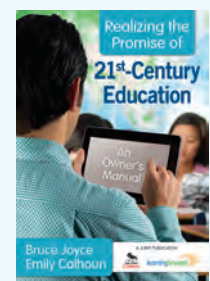
By Bruce Joyce and Emily Calhoun

While many futurists tout the value of teaching students 21st-century skills, bridging the concept to practice is best accomplished by professional educators. Joyce and Calhoun know how to enact critical reforms that enable schools to prepare students for today's workforce. They outline a clear vision for advancing school reform that emphasizes infusing technology across the curriculum. Specific steps include:

- Providing technology access to *all* students to promote equity and engagement;
- Developing hybrid courses that prepare students to meet 21st-century needs;
- Designing professional development that connects technology to teaching;

- Improving literacy instruction;
- Changing the high school paradigm; and
- Involving teachers, parents, and community members in school leadership.

Educators can transform education using the information and communications technology. Joyce and Calhoun show how to deliver on the promise of a 21st-century education by teaching students the skills they need to achieve in their careers and in life.



Through a partnership with Corwin Press, Learning Forward members can add the Book Club to their membership at any time and receive four books a year for \$59. To receive this book, add the Book Club to your membership before Dec. 15. It will be mailed in January. For more information about this or any membership package, call 800-727-7288 or email [office@learningforward.org](mailto:office@learningforward.org).





## In the recipe for effectiveness, professional learning is the key ingredient

Whisk one-quarter cup mayonnaise with two tablespoons of lemon juice.

Add to it 12 ounces of drained tuna packed in olive oil, one-half cup chopped drained roasted red peppers, 10 chopped, pitted Kalamata black olives, one chopped celery rib, and two tablespoons chopped red onion. Season with salt and pepper. Assemble on a lightly toasted baguette brushed with olive oil and topped with fresh lettuce.

I love this grown-up tuna salad sandwich, and I enjoy it best with a significant other and a glass of Sauvignon Blanc.

This isn't the tuna salad sandwich I always made. But experience, curiosity, and some knowledge about food helped me get to this point. And it made me think about some formulas I've heard about making sure teachers become effective. Do the ingredients all add up?

There is no argument that quality teaching makes a difference in student learning. *Teacher Professional Learning in the United States: Case Studies of State Policies and Strategies* (Jaquith, Mindich, Wei, & Darling-Hammond, 2010), the third report in Learning Forward's study on the state of professional learning in the United States, notes that in the last decade, policymakers, researchers, and

**Mark Diaz is president of Learning Forward's board of trustees.**

### on board MARK DIAZ

practitioners have come to the same conclusion: Teacher effectiveness is a key factor in improving academic outcomes for students.

Teachers have often told me they know which students come from a particular teacher's class because they are so well-prepared. They also whisper to me that I should check out another teacher's class scores because year after year his students are falling behind.

Many readers agree that professional learning is the single most important strategy for extending and refining their knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practices. It is troubling that in many ongoing discussions, professional learning is viewed as remediation.

Denver Public Schools seems to understand that educator effectiveness is more than a recipe. Its new system "is an opportunity to elevate the teaching profession," says Tracy Dorland, executive director for educator effectiveness. "...This is about thinking of the profession differently, in a way that respects teaching as a complicated craft, requiring teacher leadership, strong collaboration with colleagues, reflection about practice, and constant efforts to improve instruction for the students whose lives we impact every day" (State Council for Educator

Effectiveness, 2011, p. 7). I hope more and more systems will come to share this perspective.

Just as teachers need many skills for their complex profession, chefs need many skills to run a successful restaurant. It is through learning — that is, experimentation, making mistakes, cooking and reflecting with friends, taking courses, getting diners' feedback, reading books, and enhancing recipes — that a chef becomes most effective. Does that mix of ingredients remind you of anything?

In many ways, I'm still learning. Would you please try the recipes I'm offering, and tell me how they work for you? I want to make sure we're all as effective as we can be.

*Buen provecho.*



### REFERENCES

Jaquith, A., Mindich, D., Wei, R.C., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2010, December). *Teacher professional learning in the United States: Case studies of state policies and strategies*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

State Council for Educator Effectiveness. (2011, April 13). *Report & recommendations*. Denver, CO: Author. Available online at [www.cde.state.co.us/EducatorEffectiveness/Partner-SCEE.asp](http://www.cde.state.co.us/EducatorEffectiveness/Partner-SCEE.asp). ■



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

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## Kentucky identified as demonstration state in Common Core project

Kentucky will serve as the demonstration state of Learning Forward's new initiative to create a statewide, comprehensive professional learning system to support educators as they implement Common Core State Standards and new student assessments. Georgia, Illinois, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Utah, and Washington will contribute to the development of the system's tools and strategies as critical friend states and learn from Kentucky's challenges and accomplishments.

With support from lead funder the Sandler Foundation, Learning Forward will provide coaching and technical assistance to Kentucky and host meetings of the seven states over the next two years of the initiative, Transforming Professional Learning to Prepare College- and Career-Ready Students: Implementing the Common Core. The resources developed through the initiative will be made available to all states as they implement the standards.

Learning Forward and the states will work in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers, National Governors Association, National Association of State Boards of Education, and American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education on the initiative.

Kentucky was selected from among several states through a competitive process this fall. Requirements for the demonstration state and critical friends states are a commitment to equity, professional development, and substantive change.

As the initiative's demonstration state, Kentucky will serve as a learning laboratory within which Learning Forward, in partnership with state and district leaders, will create a tiered, multiyear comprehensive plan that stages professional learning for the standards and assessments. The state will also support new school year and daily school schedules that provide substantive time for professional learning for educators and establish new systems for working with third-party providers and vendors who provide expertise.

### HELP TO ENSURE QUALITY OF CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Who makes sure that conference sessions meet your needs and align with Learning Forward's expectations for high-quality professional learning? A wide range of committed members work with Learning Forward's Conference Program Planning Committee to review session proposals using a carefully developed protocol and rubric.

Learning Forward seeks volunteers to participate in this process to select sessions for the 2012 Annual Conference in Boston, Mass. Volunteers will be trained and supported throughout the process. If you are interested in participating, email Suzanne Siegel (suzanne.siegel@learningforward.org) by Jan. 15, 2012.

### LEARNING FORWARD CALENDAR

- Jan. 31, 2012:** Proposal deadline for Learning Forward 2012 Annual Conference in Boston, Mass.
- Feb. 28, 2012:** Apply to join the next cohort of Learning School Alliance schools.
- March 15, 2012:** Apply to join Academy Class of 2014.
- July 15-18, 2012:** Learning Forward's 2012 Summer Conference in Denver, Colo.

# Learning Forward Awards 2011

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*Congratulations  
to these  
leaders in the  
field on their  
achievements.*

## Contribution to the Field

**Carl A. Cohn**  
Palm Springs, Calif.



## Distinguished Service

**Karen Anderson** (left), Mesquite, Texas

**Kathryn Kee**, Shady Shores, Texas



## Best Research

*Building Leadership: The Knowledge of Principals in Creating Collaborative Communities of Professional Learning* (unpublished dissertation)

**Chad Dumas**  
Hastings, Neb.



## Susan Loucks-Horsley

**Kathy DiRanna**  
Santa Ana, Calif.





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2011 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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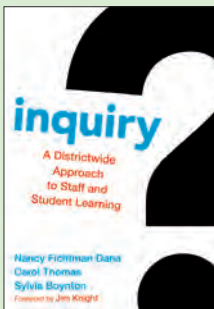


*Learning Forward expresses appreciation to the sponsors of the 2011 Annual Conference in Anaheim.*

# NEW *in the* BOOKSTORE

## INQUIRY: A DISTRICTWIDE APPROACH TO STAFF AND STUDENT LEARNING

Nancy Fichtman Dana, Carol Thomas, & Sylvia Boynton

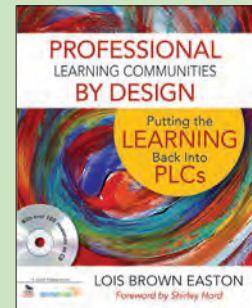


This book, through its inquiry model, helps districts define, develop, and implement a systematic inquiry-based process with a laser-like focus on both adult and student learning. The authors' award-winning school improvement program, featured in the text, offers a fresh look at how to improve the quality of teaching and learning across a district. Administrators, teachers, and students will find an invaluable road map for tackling real-world challenges and taking

control of their own learning. *Corwin with Learning Forward, 2011*  
**B529, 20 pp., \$35.00 members, \$43.75 nonmembers**

## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES BY DESIGN: PUTTING THE LEARNING BACK INTO PLCs

Lois Brown Easton

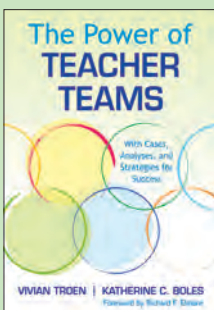


Award-winning educator Lois Brown Easton's latest work provides a compelling case study in narrative form, a chronological PLC planning outline, and first-hand "lessons learned" about how PLCs develop, mature, and sustain themselves. A companion CD includes professional learning designs for varied PLC contexts; helpful forms, templates, and rubrics; and protocols for collecting, analyzing, and applying data. *Corwin with Learning Forward, 2011*

**B514 + CD ROM, 304 pp., \$48.00 members, \$60.00 nonmembers**

## THE POWER OF TEACHER TEAMS: WITH CASES, ANALYSES, AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Vivian Troen & Katherine C. Boles

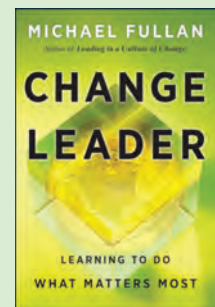


The most important reason for building teacher teams is to enhance student learning through improved instruction — and that story is at the heart of this book. Through richly detailed case studies, this book demonstrates how schools can transform their teams into more effective learning communities that foster teacher leadership. School leaders will find guidelines, methods, and concrete steps for building and sustaining effective teacher teams. Also included are one DVD with video case studies and

one CD with reproducibles. *Corwin with Learning Forward, 2011*  
**B516, 256 pp. + DVD & CD-ROM, \$44.00 members, \$55.00 nonmembers**

## CHANGE LEADER: LEARNING TO DO WHAT MATTERS MOST

Michael Fullan

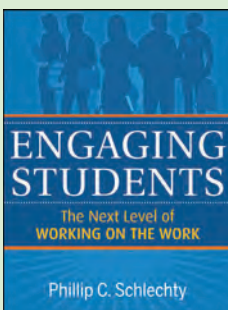


In *Change Leader*, Michael Fullan focuses on the core practices of leadership that are so vital for leading in today's complex world. He reveals seven core practices for today's leaders, all of which appear to be deceptively simple but actually get to the essence of what differentiates a powerful leader from one who is merely competent. Fullan shows leaders how to avoid policies and strategies that focus on shallow and short-term goals and develop leadership skills for long-term success. *Wiley, 2011*

**B517, 160 pp., \$28.00 members, \$35.00 nonmembers**

## ENGAGING STUDENTS: THE NEXT LEVEL OF WORKING ON THE WORK

Phillip C. Schlechty



This innovative and practical book is focused on helping teachers become increasingly successful in designing engaging work for their students. Schlechty contends that rather than viewing schools as teaching platforms, schools must be viewed as learning platforms. Rather than seeing schools as knowledge distribution systems, schools must be seen as knowledge work systems. Rather than defining teachers as instructors, teachers

must be defined as designers, leaders, and guides to instruction. *Engaging Students* also includes useful questionnaires that will facilitate discussion, analysis, and action planning at both school and classroom levels. *Wiley, 2011*

**B518, 224 pp., \$30.00 members, \$37.50 nonmembers**

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## No more excuses — let's get busy with the challenges at hand

Today we know more than ever about what constitutes effective teaching and how we can ensure more students leave their K-12 education career- and college-ready. Research has consistently affirmed the importance of two factors in schools that produce the best results for students: the quality of teaching and leadership. Two foundations have stepped up to provide educators with a deeper understanding of findings from research and their application in schools. The 10-year investment by The Wallace Foundation in school leadership has led to the revision of leadership standards, development of leadership frameworks, validation of leader evaluation tools, and guidance for the development of future leaders. District staff members concerned about poor leadership or inadequate support can turn to [www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center](http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center) for guidance.

Equally important is the emergence of research on what constitutes effective teaching. While many independent efforts have been under way for years, the intensive focus of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation on what constitutes effective teaching has put the nation's spotlight on the issue. The foundation's website ([www.gatesfoundation.org/college-ready](http://www.gatesfoundation.org/college-ready))

•  
**Stephanie Hirsh** ([stephanie.hirsh@learningforward.org](mailto:stephanie.hirsh@learningforward.org)) is executive director of Learning Forward.

**education**) includes research, tools, and resources for building systems that lead to more effective teaching.

However, translating these important findings into successful outcomes for students and educators will live or die by state, provincial, and school district systems of professional learning. Professional learning is the only process educators have for systematically moving research findings into practice. School systems need commitment, leadership, resources, designs, and data — in other words, attention to the Standards for Professional Learning.

Everyone has an important role to play in moving research into practice.

**Policymakers:** Govern and regulate with expectation and support for continuous improvement as key to achieving goals. Support the development of systems of professional learning that ensure educators understand the standards by which their performance will be assessed and the means they can access to support continuous growth.

**District office staff:** Build systems of professional learning that are focused on supporting all students and staff members to achieve performance outcomes. Adopt a vision for professional learning that builds collective responsibility, supports school-focused improvement, and

provides skilled facilitation for ongoing team-based learning and problem solving. Use the Standards for Professional Learning to guide the work.

**Principals and teachers:** Focus on data to determine the results you want for all students and the learning and support you need to ensure their success. Organize as learning communities and assume responsibilities for the success of all students and educators. Commit to

ongoing learning and see that your best practices spread from classroom to classroom and school to school. Document the impact of your professional learning so that others understand why continued

support and advocacy is essential.

**Technical assistance providers:** Listen to your education partners to understand the help they seek in meeting student and educator needs. When designing professional learning, put the standards front and center so your partners understand the body of research from which you work. Be the advocate for standards-based professional learning and help educators get it right. Document results and share findings so that more schools and school systems understand professional learning's importance and support increases for best practices.

Let's get busy with the challenges at hand. We have valuable new tools to address them. ■





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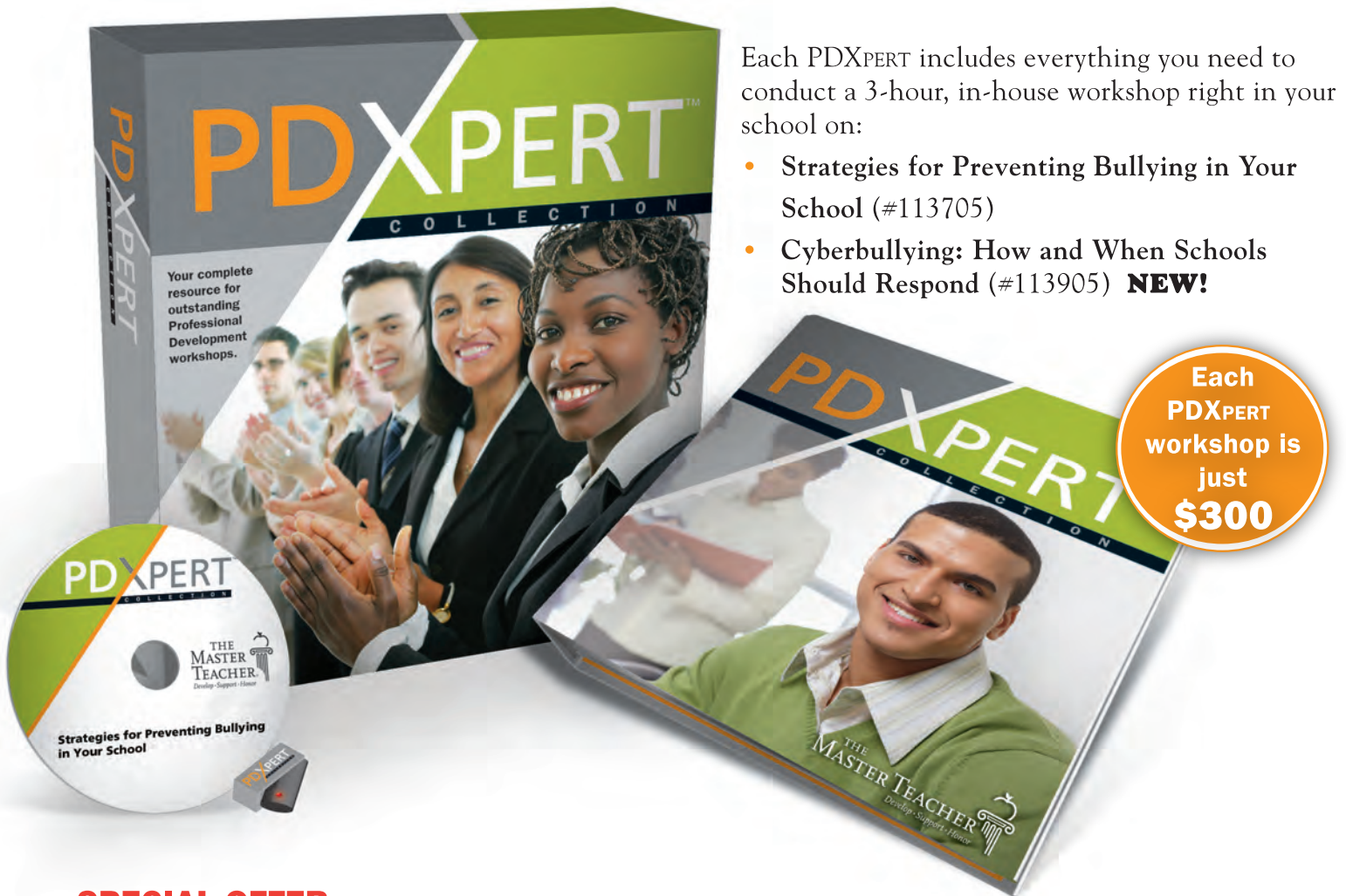
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# Resources for Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners

## The Institute

April 18-20, 2012  
Washington, D.C. Metro Area



This institute led by Paula Rutherford, author of *Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners*, will focus on ways to recognize, respect, and respond to differences in learners with practical and research-based approaches that scaffold and extend learning.

## The Book

WOW!

*Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners* by Paula Rutherford is the book we have been waiting for! I've looked at literally hundreds of resource books for teachers, but I've never found one this extensive and user friendly. This book has the why, the how to, and the what then of methods to meet the challenges of at-risk, struggling, special needs, gifted and talented, and English Language Learners all in one easy-to-use reference. It should be on the desk of every teacher!

Betsy Geery  
Professional Development Center Coordinator  
Las Cruces Public Schools, New Mexico



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