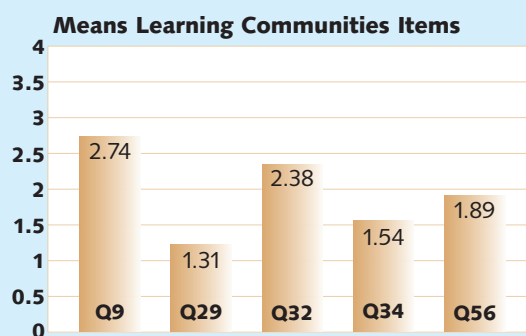


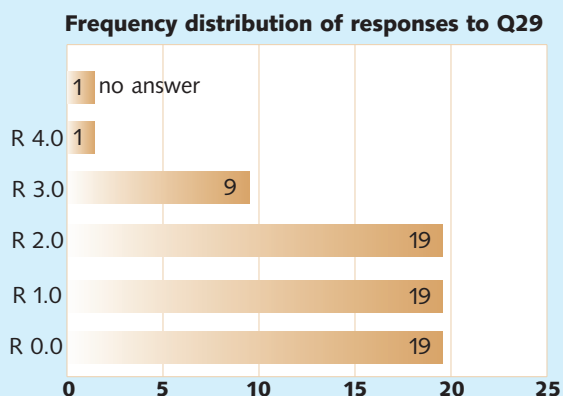
ASSESSMENT INVENTORY MEASURES PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT QUALITY

Over the years, many people have inquired about the validity and reliability of the NSDC Standards for Staff Development self-assessment instrument included at the end of the standards book (NSDC, 2001). My answer to those who asked was that



Here are survey items related to the Learning Communities standard. Use a scale of 0=never; 1=seldom; 2=sometimes; 3=frequently; 4=always.

- 9. The teachers in my school meet as a whole faculty to discuss with each other practical ways to improve teaching and learning.
- 29. We observe each other's classroom instruction as one way to improve our teaching.
- 32. At our school, beginning teachers have opportunities to work with more experienced teachers.
- 34. We receive feedback from our colleagues about classroom practices.
- 56. Teachers look at student work with each other.



the self-assessment had face validity.

Today, I can refer individuals to the Standards Assessment Inventory, which offers a valid and reliable measure of the quality of professional development in a school as defined by NSDC's Standards for Staff Development.

While the original self-assessment is a useful tool for initiating conversation, encouraging reflection, and spurring planning, NSDC leaders became concerned when we learned that many schools were using it for other purposes. We felt compelled to provide an instrument that was more research-based. As a result, we partnered with the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory to design and produce an instrument that met both validity and reliability concerns. The process took more than two years, and, in the end, we had an instrument that met our criteria:

- Instrument reliability was consistent and high across all three pilot studies for the overall scale, and consistently good for the 12 sub-scales.
- The instrument demonstrated good content validity through the process of soliciting expert advice on the instrument's clarity and relevance to the characteristics of each of the standards and to the experiences of school faculties.
- Criterion-rated validity was supported, indicating that teachers' ratings of their school's professional development program alignment with NSDC standards were comparable in rating to their school's rating by experts. (SEDL, 2003).

More importantly, NSDC leadership wanted to provide school leaders with a tool that would help them with the following questions:

- What is the overall picture of professional development in our school?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of professional development in our school?
- Where might we focus attention to improve the quality of professional development in our school?

The assessment inventory comprises 60 questions, five questions per standard. Most educators complete the inventory in about 20 minutes. Some school leaders use the inventory as the basis for faculty study, building consensus on the status of professional learning in the school, and crafting an action plan for improvement.

The NSDC Standards Assessment Inventory provides



In each issue of *JSD*, Stephanie Hirsh writes about the NSDC Standards for Staff Development. Columns about the standards can be found at www.nsdcc.org.

educators with a picture of the quality of their professional development as defined by the NSDC standards and as viewed by the school's faculty. After each member of the faculty completes the survey, the results can be tallied to provide a score for each question. See top chart, p. 63.

For each question, users are also provided the frequency of responses. See bottom chart, p. 63.

TEACHERS LOOK AT STUDENT WORK WITH EACH OTHER

The average score assigned to each standard helps school leadership teams identify overall strengths and weaknesses of professional development. Teams can use the scores for each question to determine particular practices that contribute to the overall score for the standard, as well as to guide their design of a plan of action. The frequency of responses to each question also is helpful because it indicates whether faculty have consensus on the score or if

the score is a result of split perceptions. Schools can use the entire report to inform school improvement and professional development processes.

Specifically, state, regional, district, and school leaders can consider the following uses for the inventory:

- To assess the current status of professional development at the school level, determine areas of strength and weaknesses, and plan for improvement;
- To help schools get a clearer picture of what is working for them and where they may want to focus their attention;
- To guide conversations regard-

ing the qualities of professional learning that produce better results for students;

- To assess whether a particular improvement effort has contributed to the quality of professional development within a school and/or across several schools or systems;
- To identify schools that are strong in certain areas and may have lessons to share with other schools;
- To help schools focus on the particular actions that contribute to higher-quality professional development

STEPHANIE HIRSH is deputy executive director of NSDC. You can contact her at 16306 Sunset Valley, Dallas, TX 75248, (972) 818-1450, fax (972) 818-1451, e-mail: stephanie.hirsh@nsdc.org.

as guided by the questions on the assessment;

- To assist groups in focusing planning efforts and using NSDC's Innovation Configurations;
- To organize and convene schools with similar needs and priorities for technical assistance; and
- To recognize and/or reward schools for quality professional development.

For these reasons and others, the Division of School Improvement, Professional Learning Services for the State of Georgia elected to use the Standards Assessment Inventory statewide. Previously, the state had adopted the NSDC Standards for Staff Development as its standards for professional learning. Steve Preston, the state director for professional learning, understood that the next logical step was to assess the degree to which professional learning practice in school aligned with the standards.

"In Georgia, we recognize that high-quality professional learning is the key to improving student learning," Preston said. "We want to make sure our schools, our systems, our regional educational agencies, and our state department have the necessary data to support quality professional learning."

Each spring and fall, every staff member in every school is asked to complete the assessment inventory. While individual responses remain anonymous, the school-wide results are available to educators committed to helping schools perform better. The principal, the central office, the regional service agency and the state department all have access. Technical assistance is planned according to the scores.

"We feel the results have focused our work and leveraged our interventions," Preston said. "Our goal is for a common language for staff development to exist across the state and for everyone to share the same view for the future of professional learning in Georgia. After just one year, we are receiving positive feedback and some early positive results."

NSDC's goal is that every teacher in every school experience quality professional learning as part of their daily work. While no state has yet reported that 100% of its schools have met the goal, Georgia is on the trajectory to achieving it.

REFERENCES

National Staff Development Council. (2001). *Standards for staff development (revised)*. Oxford, OH: Author.

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory Evaluation Services. (2003, December). *National Staff Development Council Standards Assessment Inventory: Summary report of instrument development process and psychometric properties*. Austin, TX: Author. ■

Assessment inventory is accessible

NSDC wishes to make the assessment inventory accessible to all schools, districts, and states.

- For additional information, see <http://store.nsd.org/>
- For a sample copy or to discuss your needs, contact me at stephanie.hirsh@nsdc.org.
- Steve Preston can be contacted about the Georgia initiative at spreston@doe.k12.ga.us or stevepreston1@comcast.net.

Read more about Georgia's use of the Standards Assessment Inventory in the March issue of *The Learning System*.